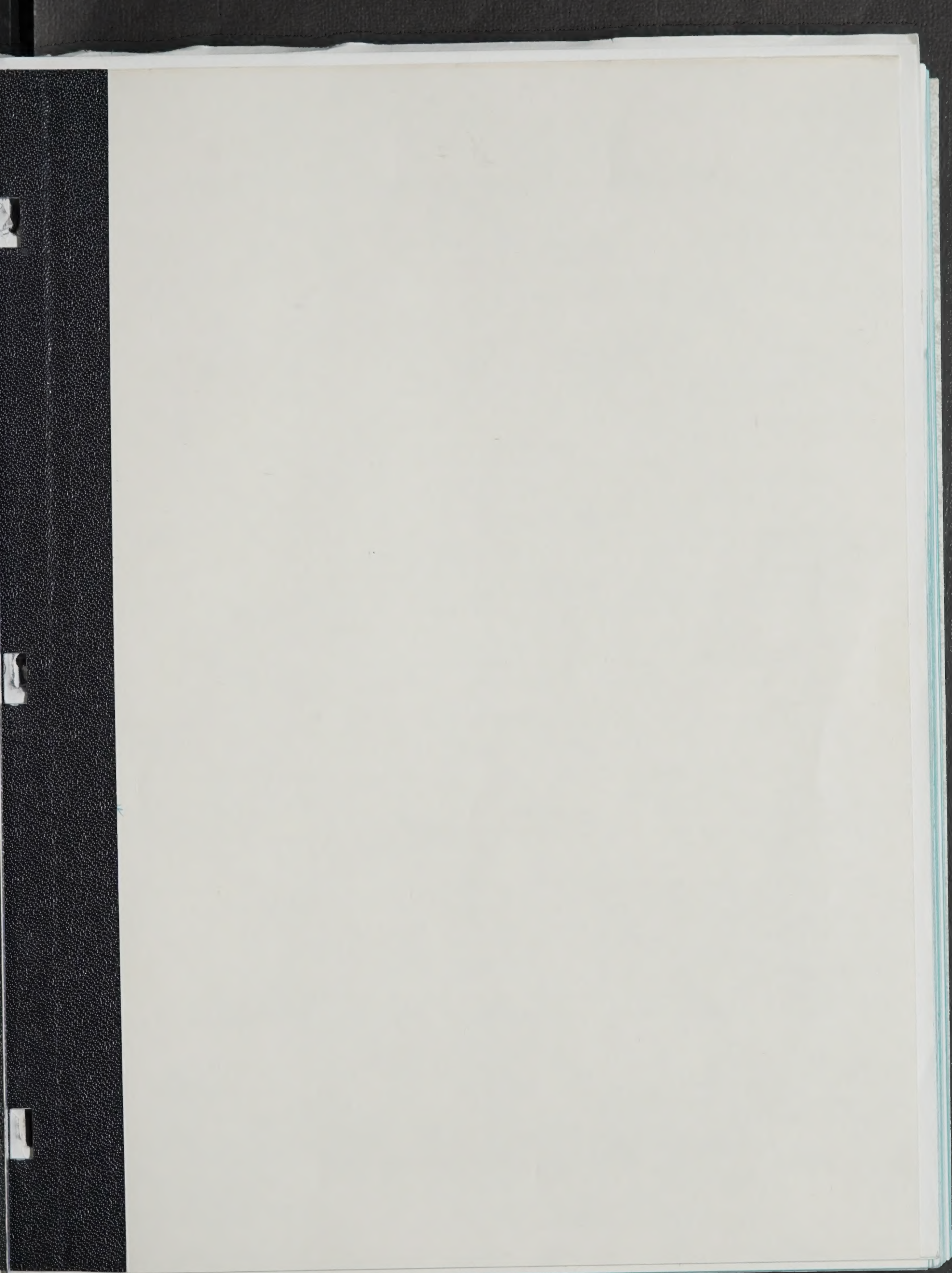


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FRONT

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BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

INTRODUCTION - The Veterans Affairs Division of the State of Montana, formerly known as the Veterans Welfare Commission was created by HB #307 and signed by Governor Stewart on March 4, 1919. The Division shall be governed by a Board known as the Board of Veterans Affairs.

MEMBERS - (1) The Board consists of five members, appointed by the Governor of Montana with the consent of the State Senate, to serve a term of five years. Not more than one member shall be appointed from a single county, however, a change of residence within the state after appointment does not alter a member's status. A vacancy occurring on the Board shall be filled by the Governor, subject to the condition of this subsection.

(2) All members shall be residents of the State of Montana and shall have been honorably discharged from service in the military force of the United States in any of its wars.

(3) The Board will elect a Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary to serve a term of one year. The proprieties being a members second year on the Board is elected vice-chairman, third year on the Board serves as Chairman and the last year on the Board is elected secretary. This is subject to change at the discretion of the majority of the Board.

(4) A fee of \$50.00, set by the State Legislature, will be paid to each member of the Board per meeting plus reimbursement for mileage, meals and lodging. This will be in accordance with State policy regarding travel.

(4) Membership in a service organization is not required but is desirable.

DUTIES - (1) It is the duty of the Board to establish a statewide service for discharged veterans and their families, actively cooperate with state and federal agencies having to do with the affairs of veterans and their families, and promote the general welfare of all veterans and their families.

(2) Employees of the board must be residents of this state. Whenever possible all employees of the board shall have served in the military forces of the United State during World War I, World War II, or the Korean or the Vietnam conflicts and shall have been honorably discharged therefrom. Preference for employment shall be given to disabled veterans.

(3) During the period of time the Legislature is in session, the Board shall appoint one or more members to be available to appear at the Legislature on behalf of the Division or veteran issues.

MEETINGS - The Board shall hold quarterly meeting with the location being at the will of the Chairman. The Chairman may also call special meeting as the need arises. Any member claiming travel expense other than for scheduled meetings must be approved by the entire board.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING - The minutes of each meeting will be recorded by the Senior Administrative Secretary and become permanent public records. A copy of those minutes will be mailed to each member prior to the next meeting for their review. Reading of the minutes can be dispensed with at the pleasure of the Board.

HIRING POLICY - All vacancies will be advertized according to the State of Montana policy in effect at the time. Each Board member will have an area of responsibility determined by the geographic location of their home.

Applications for those positions involving Board approval will be screened in the Helena office and copies of those qualified for an interview will be mailed to each member. The current policy mandates the entire Board (or majority) to interview for the positions of Administrator and Senior Service Officer. The Administrator, Senior Service Officer and Board Member having jurisdiction over that area are empowered to conduct the interview for vacancies of a Service Officer. For Secretarial and Clerical positions, interviews will be done by the Administrator, Service Officer of the office involved and the Administrative Secretary. These interviews will be oral structured questions, which are in accordance with State of Montana policy. The Board may employ the assistance of the Helena Administrative Secretary to assist with any or all interviews.

TERMINATION POLICY - The Board authorizes the Administrator of the Division to take disciplinary action, including dismissal, against any employee when deemed necessary. The Board will be furnished copies of letters of any significant consequence.

COMMUNIQUE - It will be the responsibility of the Administrator/Helena Office to keep the Board apprised of any modifications in policy or procedures that affect the Division and/or the Board. This will be executed in the form of a letter or phone call if the need arises between regular Board meetings.

HONOLULU

January 31, 1990

Rich Brown, Administrator
Montana Veterans Affairs Division
P.O. Box 5715
Helena, Montana 59604

Dear Administrator Brown,

Due to my being unavaible to interview applicants for the Service Officer position in Kalispell, I would like to have Board member Bernadette Opp act in my place.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Neil Shepherd". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

NEIL SHEPHERD, Member
Board of Veterans Affairs

FRONT

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order on July 10, 1987 at 2:00 P.M., in Billings, Montana.

Due to the absence of Chairman, Neil Shepherd, the meeting was chaired by Vice Chairman, John Gallagher.

Other members and guests present were:

Bernie Opp, Member	Fred Olson, Sen. Service Officer
Bob Durkee, Member	Representation from the Veterans
Dale Pawlowski, Member	Affairs Service Officers.
Rich Brown, Administrator	A delegation from the American
Marie Hinman, Admin. Sec.	Legion.

New Board member Dale Pawlowski was introduced. Mr. Pawlowski was appointed to replace Jack McGlynn, who retired after serving 15 years on the Board of Veterans Affairs.

A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as written, however Bernie Opp asked for clarification on the following:

Will Sherrie Parko, training secretary and Jim McNulty training Service Officer be put on permanent status? How is the vacancy savings being handled? Why did Fred Olson take a list of requests from the Service Officers to the Board when in fact the Service Officers did not ask for anything, and has anything been done on the requests to date?

Rich Brown, Administrator answered her questions as follows:

Yes, Sherrie Parko and Jim McNulty will be on permanent status after July 1, 1987. The vacancy savings is being handled by the Helena office picking up the duties left by the elimination of the Service Officer, accountant position. Marie Hinman is doing the financial and accounting and Fred Olson is doing the Service Officer part. The requests made to the Board are being taken care of, however, those items that involved expenditures had to be postponed until after the 1st of July. The questions of reclassification of the Service Officers can be included at the next budget hearing with the Governor's office and we will ask for a Grade 13. He did mention however, that we made a number of requests last year, including an office in Havre and more employees and they were all denied. He also pointed out that the legislature voted to freeze all salaries for the next two years so our appropriations remain at last fiscal year's level.

The meeting then moved on to a report on the Veterans Cemetery. A copy of the rules that have been adopted were

passed out. The only major changes to the proposed rules were to include members of the National Guard or Reservists who have a six year or more tour of duty and all veterans and spouses must provide their own vault. The U.V.C. will purchase the vaults at a reduced price and sell them at a slight profit with the money being put into a fund to help pay for the indigent veteran. Also, if the veteran is not eligible for the \$150.00 plot allowance from the V.A. then the family will be charged \$150.00 for the burial. \$100.00 will be used to dig the grave and \$50.00 for maintenance costs. The wells have been drilled and there is an amply water supply. There is also space available for approximately 39,000 grave sites. The digging of the first 40 graves has been donated and they will be covered with plywood. The center 5 acres will remain open for memorials, however there is no money available to develop this. The U.V.C. has offered to help and the other Service Organizations will be contacted for donations. A problem does exist however concerning military honors at the grave sites. By using the Oregon Trails cemetery as an example, where they are burying a least one individual a day, who would provide these honors? Concerning the revenue issue for the cemetery, Mr. Brown brought up the fact that the Legislature has passed a Bill for a State Income Tax Revenue Check Off. This will be for one year only, however we can get Federal matching funds for all monies collected. Other items discussed were headstones, burial by stacking and the county where the veteran dies being billed \$30.00 for the placing of the headstone.

Going on to the next order of business, it was brought up that an article appeared in the Roundup newspaper which pointed out that a lack of documentation kept the veteran from getting benefits that he might otherwise be entitled, and for assistance, write to Jack Light in Great Falls. The question was "Who is Jack Light"? Rich Brown answered that he is Congressman Marlenee's assistant. John Gallagher commended the Congressman on wanting to help the veteran but felt the next time they should identify the source.

The last legislature designated I-15 as the Veterans Memorial Highway. A letter was written to the Highway Department as to what the regulations were concerning signs, crosses, etc. The response was "nothing could be erected along the highways, but the rest areas could be used". It will be up to the Veterans Organizations on what they would like to do.

Concerning the budget for fiscal year 1987, a copy of the ending June balance was passed out. We have expended 97% of the budgeted amount with one outstanding payroll and several outstanding telephone bills. We had to restrict travel and the use of the telephone during the month of June in order to stay within our budget. Also, the Governor

asked for a 2.2% savings from each Department and our share amount to \$10,000.00. The Department of Military Affairs was able to pay our share as they had a small surplus in their utility account. We anticipate an ending balance of \$0.00. If anyone has any questions concerning the budget, they may call Rich or Marie in the Helena office. Dale Pawlowski asked who audits our budget? Rich answered that the Legislative Auditors do, and it is done every other year. The last audit that was done was 100% good.

Copies of the 1988-89 budget were handed out. Rich expressed his fears that the budget would not hold however, as he feels the Legislature will have to go into a special session. He pointed out that the money in the Cemetery fund is strictly spending authority. We have been funded for only 18 full time employees, losing 1/2 a position. The 1/2 time clerical position has been changed to full time, with the individual working for the Veterans Division 3 days a week and for Centralized Services two days a week. The Service Officer Accountant position has been eliminated with the accounting duties being added to the Helena Administrative Secretary position and the service officer work being done by the Senior Service Officer. Our current budget level is \$453,000 for this year and \$445,000 for next year. The difference is due to auditors fees.

Effective September 1, 1987, Jerry Collins, who is now in Billings has requested to move back to Wolf Point and Art Tyler, who is now in Wolf Point would like to take the Billings office. The other major change will be the retirement of Arlene Soderstrom in Kalispell. The Kalispell office has been our busiest office and Arlene has done a tremendous job for the Division. She will have completed her 25th year on September 11, 1987. The other offices have been offered the opportunity of transferring to Kalispell. If no one is interested, Jim McNulty, who was hired as a trainee would like to go to the Kalispell office. He should begin working in Kalispell as soon as possible so he may train with Arlene, prior to her retirement. Bernie Opp made a motion to approve the Billings and Wolf Point transfers, Bob Durkee seconded the motion and it was carried. Bob Durkee made a motion that the Administrator take care of the Kalispell vacancy. Dale Pawlowski seconded the motion and it was carried.

A discussion then followed on the office at the Billings Clinic. Rich advised the Board that the clinic was slow in giving us a larger office and an F.T.S. phone line. Consequently, we have moved to the Vets Center and have found these individuals to be extremely cooperative. At present, we are maintaining two offices.

Arlene Soderstrom has requested that she be allowed to run her annual leave out. (She has the maximum allowable.) Bob

Durkee made a motion to honor her request, Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

Bernie Opp made a motion that a letter of appreciation and a plaque be presented to Arlene Soderstrom, and also to Jack McGlynn, retiring Board member. Dale Pawlowski seconded the motion and it was carried.

Bob Durkee made a motion that a letter be sent to the American Legion thanking them for arranging a meeting room at their convention site. Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

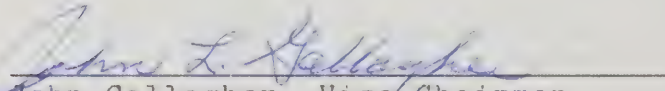
Bernie Opp made a motion that the next meeting be held in Miles City, Montana at 3:00 P.M. on September 18, 1987. Bob Durkee seconded the motion and it was carried.

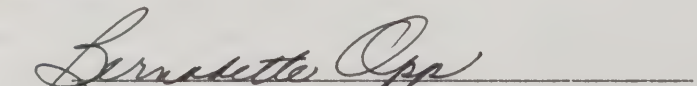
The election of officers for the coming year was postponed, due to the absence of Neil Shepherd. They will be held at the September meeting.

John Gallagher brought up the fact that the Board needs a set of by-laws and procedures.. It was decided that the Board will draft such a set of by-laws with everyone submitting suggestions on what they should include. Because of the changes in the Board members, now districts will also become part of the by-laws. The Board asked Marie Hinman to review the minutes of the Board meetings for the past several years, and prepare a report for the next meeting to include what the Board policies are to date.

The last order of business concerned personnel problems, which the Board moved into an executive session to discuss. Rich Brown and Marie Hinman were then asked to re-join the meeting at which time the Board members reviewed these problems with Mr. Brown and asked him to take whatever action necessary to correct the situation.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.


John Gallagher, Vice Chairman


Bernadette Opp, Acting Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Neil Shepherd at 3:00 P.M. on September 18, 1987 at the V.A. Hospital in Miles City, Montana.

Members and guests present were:

Bernie Opp, Member	Rich Brown, Administrator
Dale Pawlowski, Member	Marie Hinman, Admin. Secretary
John Gallagher, Member	Pam Pedersen, Service Officer

It was reported that Bob Durkee was unable to attend due to prior commitments.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written.

The first order of business was the election of officers which had been postponed at the last meeting. John Gallagher was nominated Chairman by Bernie Opp, seconded by Dale Pawlowski, and carried. Bob Durkee was nominated Vice Chairman by Dale Pawlowski, seconded by John Gallagher and carried. Bernie Opp was nominated Secretary by John Gallagher, seconded by Dale Pawlowski and carried.

Newly elected Chairman Gallagher then moved on to the next order of business which centered around personnel changes. Rich Brown reported to the Board that Jerry Collins is back in Wolf Point, Art Tyler is now in Billings and Jim McNulty has transferred to Kalispell. Mr. McNulty is working under the Veterans Jobs Training Act with half of his salary being paid by the Federal Government for up to 9 months. We have also hired Dolores Kloeckner as a secretary in Billings under the Federal Training Act with 700 hours of her salary being reimbursed by the Federal Government.

Mr. Brown also advised the Board that the Division's budget will be affected by Arlene Soderstrom's terminal leave and also Fred Olson has made known his intentions to leave the Division to accept another position, and his terminal leave will also have to be paid. Rich's suggestion would be to leave the Senior Service Officer position open to re-coup some of the money. He asked the Board direction on how they would like to handle the situation. He pointed out that the position could be covered by the Service Officers from Butte and Great Falls until it could be filled permanently.

A discussion followed and the end result was to temporarily cover the position with the Butte and Great Falls Service Officers and advertize the position in-house. Neil Shepherd made a motion that the entire Board, or those that are available, do the interviews and hiring. Bernadette Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

Rich Brown reported on the Cemetery. He pointed out to the Board that in our operating budget the \$30,000 for the cemetery is not actually there. This is expected revenue. A map of the cemetery was displayed and Rich informed the Board that Section C is now open and on September 8, 1987, our first veteran, Joseph J. Pavig was buried. The cemetery is far from completion but the scheduled plans are to finish Phase I as soon as possible and a great deal of this will be done by late Fall. Phase I will accommodate 6,000 veterans. Two flag poles have been donated by a group of veterans from Northeastern Montana. Also trees have been donated and the Montana Granite Company has blank markers that they will sell for \$65.00 (half-cost) for memorials. We will have to reopen the rules to include procedures for burying individuals with aids and hepatitis B. We will also have to define the rules on cremation so we don't develop problems with veterans and spouses selecting different types of burial. Rich asked the Board their opinion if re-interment is requested. The consensus was we could re-inter veterans under certain conditions but should have a firm policy so its not discriminatory. This will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

At the meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs in April, a resolution was passed which limited the activities of the Administrator of the Division. Subsequently, a letter was mailed to each member to cast a vote to rescind the resolution. The resolution was rescinded, however the subject was again brought before the Board so it may appear in the minutes and be a matter of public record. Bernie Opp made a motion to rescind the motion, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

Dale Pawlowski reported that he had recently attended the Veterans Administration workshop at Fort Harrison and felt it was very poorly attended.

The meeting then moved on to re-districting the areas of responsibility for each Board member. The suggestions were as follows:

Dale Pawlowski- Wolf Point and Miles City

Neil Shepherd-Kalispell and Missoula

Bernie Opp-Bozeman and Billings


Bob Durkee-Helena and Butte

John Gallagher-Great Falls

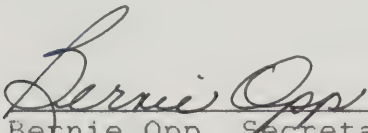
Bernie Opp made a motion to adopt these areas, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

The last order of business was a discussion on the by-laws and policies of the Board. Marie Hinman passed out a summary that highlighted proceeding of the Board and their policies from it's inception in 1919. The Board will review what has been done in the past and discuss the matter further at the next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for December 4, 1987 at 10:00 A.M. at the National Guard Armory in Helena.



John Gallagher, Chairman



Bernie Opp, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman John Gallagher, on November 13, 1987 at 3:45 P.M. in the National Guard Armory in Helena.

The following members and guests were present:

Bob Durkee, Vice Chairman	Rich Brown, Administrator
Bernie Opp, Secretary	Marie Hinman, Admin. Sec.
Dale Pawlowski, Member	Tony Cumming, A.L.
Neil Shepherd, Member	

A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

For the first order of business, Rich Brown reported to the Board that Jim McNulty, Service Officer had been transferred to Kalispell and was still under a six month probation. Fred Olson, Senior Service Officer has resigned and gone to work for the V.F.W. Jerry Collins, Service Officer in Billings has transferred back to Wolf Point and Art Tyler, Service Officer in Wolf Point has transferred to Billings. Fred Olson has asked that he be paid on a biweekly basis for his terminal leave so his official date of termination will be November 20, 1987.

Interviews for the position of Senior Service Officer had been held prior to the Board meeting. Bernie Opp made a motion to offer the position to Frank Kankelborg, who had scored the highest on the oral structured interview, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

An update on the veterans cemetery was given by Administrator Brown. He told the Board that there had been concern about regulations governing the burial of individuals who were inflicted with aids or hepatitis B, however he has since been informed that the funeral directors are responsible for complying with any regulations governing these cases. He also reported that the sprinkler system is in, the road has been built, and flag poles have been received. Next will be a fencing, culverts, etc. The revenue check-off will hopefully raise funds for further development. It was determined that no action was necessary at this time to reopen the rules, that the Board would wait for the U.V.C. to initiate any rule changes.

Rich Brown reported that the Division would save enough money to balance the budget at this time by temporarily leaving the Butte Service Officer position vacant.

The Women Veterans program at Malmstrom Air Force Base was very successful. It was exceptionally well attended.

There is a scheduled meeting on Tuesday of next week (November 17th) with the A.F.L./C.I.O. and the Vets Center to expand the incarcerated veteran program. There have been nine individuals paroled to date and the program is going well.

Concerning the policies of the Board, it was decided that the Board should develop a revised set of by-laws and procedures that govern the Board. Bernie Opp made a motion to this effect, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

A discussion followed on the rules and regulations that now govern the Board. Bob Durkee made a motion that the Board adopt Roberts Rules of Order. The motion died from lack of a second. Neil Shepherd made a motion that each Board member compile a summary of what they would like included in the by-laws, send the summary to Marie for incorporation, to be presented at the next Board meeting for approval. Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

Tony Cumming, State Adjutant for the American Legion questioned the effect of the 1968 regulation which restricts our Service Officers from holding offices in the Service Organizations. A short discussion was held with the outcome being a motion by Bernie Opp to rescind this policy. Dale Pawlowski seconded the motion and it was carried.

The 1986 regulation, which states that for any Board member to travel at State expense (other than scheduled Board meetings or to interview applicants for jobs) would take entire Board approval, was also questioned. Bernie Opp made a motion to delete the word entire and insert the word majority, for Board approval. Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

Under the heading of new business, Rich Brown advised the Board that he had been contacted by General Turnage to nominate an individual to serve on the National Women Veterans Committee. He has submitted Bernie Opp's name and feels she has considerable support.


The question of the next meeting date was addressed and Rich suggested that the date be left open as the P.O.W.'s will be meeting in Billings in the Spring (possibly April) and perhaps the Board could schedule their meeting to coincide with this. The Board concurred.

The Board was asked to support legislation to make Veterans Day a full holiday, including the schools. Bernie Opp made

a motion that the Board will support this legislation, Dale Pawlowski seconded the motion and it was carried.

Also, the National Association of Veterans Affairs Divisions is promoting legislation that would move Memorial Day back to the traditional 30th day of May. Dale Pawlowski made a motion to support this, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.


John Gallagher, Chairman


Bernadette Opp, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held in Billings, Montana on the 8th day of April 1988. The meeting was called to order by Chairman John Gallagher with the following members and guests present:

Bob Durkee, Vice Chariman Marie Hinman, Admin. Secretary
 Neil Shepherd, Member Cheryl Heald, Service Officer
 Rich Brown, Administrator Roy Dalrymple, Guest
 Frank Kankelborg, Senior Service Officer

Members Pawlowski and Opp were unable to attend due to prior commitments.

Neil Shepherd made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 13, 1987 meeting as written. Bob Durkee seconded the motion and it was carried.

The first order of business concerned the Normandy Museum. Rich Brown explained that a committee for the Normandy Museum had contacted our office as well as the other States requesting that we supply a Montana rock to be used to erect a wall in front of the Museum. With the help of General Duffy and his staff, we secured a stone that came from the original Capitol Building (due to renovation) which was built in 1889, had a plaque engraved and attached to the stone and forwarded the same to Washington, D.C. where it will be transported with the other State's stone to France. The inscription dedicated the rock to the over 2,000 men and women from Montana who gave their lives for our country during WW II.

The next order of business was the Montana Veterans Cemetery. Rich advised the Board that 10% of the plot allowance money (which excludes any donations) would be used for a perpetual fund. Also, the question has come up concerning the re-interment or dis-interment of veterans. A discussion was held with the end result being Neil Shepherd made a motion to change the cemetery rules to include re-interments and dis-interments and the family of those individuals would be responsible for all costs. The rule will be researched to comply with the realm of legal responsibility. Bob Durkee seconded the motion and it was carried. Bob Durkee brought to the attention of the Board a letter from the U.V.C. which concerns the vaults required for burial. The U.V.C. has said they would supply the vaults, making a small margin of profit. The profit would be used for those veterans who can not afford the price of a vault. They have also offered to provide markers and trees as memorials for those individuals who aren't buried there. Bob said he felt these ideas could run into problems as this would have to be voluntary. Also, since the U.V.C. is not chartered they could run into difficulty by raising funds. They need to have some legal rules.

Rich went on to say that there are now 13 individuals buried at the cemetery and the bases for the flag poles are done. In May we will raise the flags. Hal Graber who is the head of the cemetery grants for the Veterans Administration will be here. The cemetery has received over \$1,000.00 in private donations however the revenue check-off is not going well. The last report was only \$1,500.00. John Gallagher said word should be gotten to the service organizations on how to donate. Bob also suggested that the law be amended to make the revenue check-off ongoing instead of one-time. It was noted that Pavlovich and Harrington did the bill the last time and it passed 100%. Bob then made a motion to ask Pavlovich to sponsor a bill to indefinitely extend the revenue check-off, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

Additional nursing home beds for veterans was the next topic of discussion. This has generated a good deal of interest, especially in the eastern part of the State. The suggestion has been made that it be located in eastern Montana, but for administrative purposes, be an extension of Columbia Falls. For those that live in eastern Montana, its now a 1,000 mile round trip to visit Columbia Falls Nursing Home. The last legislature looked at Galen and Twin Bridges and found this locations not suitable. Neil Shepherd made a motion that the Board support the concept of additional nursing home beds for veterans in eastern Montana but not endorse a location. Bob Durkee seconded the motion and it was carried.

Concerning the budget, Rich advised the Board that 75% of the fiscal year has elapsed. The Governor's office has asked how we propose to handle a 5% reduction in the our budget. We responded that our budget has no room for additions reductions. Because of contracts for Federal reimbursement for three of our employees, we are in the area where we had hoped to be for money remaining this fiscal year.

The Service Officer upgrades also were discussed. The present grade is not in line with other State jobs that are the same. There was no objection to a reclassification if it took place in next years budget. Letters from the Service Officers were sent to the Department of Military Affairs and forwarded to the State Personnel Division. A new job description will be written. Rich asked the Board to support pay raises for the Service Officers if we can do so without loss of present personnel. Neil Shepherd made a motion, Bob Durkee seconded it and it was carried.

Rich also informed the Board that a Veterans Supermarket was held in Butte the day before St. Patricks day. This was sponsored by the Veterans Administration, the Veterans Affairs Division and the local Job Service office. Rich

pointed out that Sherrie Parko, secretary in Butte was instrumental in setting this up and we plan to do a similar workshop in Helena in August. Neil Shepherd made a motion that the Board send Sherrie Parko a letter of thanks, Bob Durkee seconded the motion and it was carried.

Chairman Gallagher asked Cheryl Heald, Service Officer in Billings, if she had any matters she wished to bring before the Board. Cheryl said the only issue was the fact that the many individuals were coming to her for help on their Social Security forms rather than going to the Social Security office. Other than that everything was fine. The Board advised her that if this becomes a burden, they will see that it is stopped.

Roy Dalrymple expressed his opinion that the veterans nursing home should be located in Billings and feels it should be acute care rather than a nursing home. The director of St. Vincents hospital is also in favor of this program and feels the Deaconess hospital would also support. Roy also discussed the D.A.V. van that is transporting patients back and forth to the Miles City hospital. The D.A.V. has logged over 490 hours of volunteer service for the month of March. The van also travels into Wyoming every Tuesday and in continuing their present schedule, they will have traveled over 100,000 miles in a year.

Frank Kankelborg informed the Board that since assuming his duties as Senior Service Officer feel we have a good staff. He made mention that Cheryl Heald, Wayne Hill and Len Leibinger are doing an excellent job, the other Service Officers are adequate. He also feels his job is very time consuming.

Rich Brown brought up the fact that Janet Moore, legislator from Condon, had discussed a 3% soda pop tax with the revenue going to the University system. If a 1% tax (not necessarily soda pop) could go to the veterans needs, and the Veterans Affairs Division was not all general fund money, we would be more secure.


John Gallagher then asked Rich Brown what was needed for the cemetery. Rich answered trees. Evergreens are best as they are a good windbreak plus they are maintenance free. Ray Dalrymple said he would contact the veterans organizations for donations of trees and John volunteered to make some contacts also.

John made mention that he had received a call from a Doctor's groups and they are going to seek legislation to mandate autopsies in all traffic related deaths. At the present time autopsies are mandated by law in non-rural cities, however there are only two cities in the State of

Montana that are classified as non rural and the rural deaths are greater than the non-rural. The individual was asking for the Board's support.

Neil Shepherd made a motion that the next meeting be held on July 8, 1988 at 10:00 A.M. in Bozeman during the American Legion Convention. Bob Durkee seconded the motion and was carried.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.


John Gallagher, Chairman


Neil Shepherd, Acting Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order on July 8, 1988 at 10:00 A.M. in Bozeman, Mt., by Chairman John Gallagher with the following members and guests present:

Bob Durkee, Vice Chairman
Bernie Opp, Secretary
Dale Pawlowski, Member
Neil Shepherd, Member
Rich Brown, Administrator
Marie Hinman, Admin. Sec.
Frank Runkelberg, S.S.U.

Ruddy Reilly, S.O.
Jerry Collins, S.O.
Dennis Piatt, S.O.
Pam Pederson, S.O.
Carol Code, Sec.
Kay Eckerup, Guest
Gary Ralsland, Guest
Charley Frolich, Guest

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

Bernie Opp asked if the cemetery rules had been changed yet. Mr. Brown answer no, not yet. She then asked if anything had been done about contacting Legislatures to make the revenue check-off for the cemetery permanent. She was answered that this will be done when the Legislature meets. Her last question was if the Administrative Secretary position had been included with the reclassification of the Service Officers. She recalled a discussion of a previous meeting that this position would be reclassified. Mr. Brown said that this position had not been included, but that it could be.

The first item on the agenda concerned the Veterans Cemetery. Rich Brown reported that we now have 26 individuals buried at the Cemetery. A question was asked about how many individuals could be buried at the cemetery. Mr. Brown answered that there are 35,000 gravesites. He also went on to say we have utilized one gravesite now by stacking. Other developments include the Mountain Bell Pioneers have volunteered to supply trees and take care of the planting and we have laid sod over the filled gravesites. He also said he had been apprised that U.S. Senator Max Baucus had been approached by a funeral director suggesting that the Cemetery be turned over to the Federal Government. Bob Durkee said he feels the State should keep the cemetery. Also, concerning the revenue check off, Mr. Brown reported that the total amount was \$3,374.00 contributed by 577 individuals and we have had \$1,300.00 cash donations. We will have to skip a year if we wish to continue with the revenue check off as the forms for next year's income tax have already been printed. He wondered if we could do better with private donations. Bob Durkee felt that people need to be reminded. Mr. Brown also pointed out that one problem we are faced with is we have

no way to bury paupers. (This includes the cost of the vault etc.) A discussion followed concerning a solution to this problem with the end result being Bernie Opp made a motion that the Board explore the possibility of the State sharing the responsibility. The motion was seconded by Dale Pawlowski and carried.

The next order of business was the need for an additional State Veterans Nursing Home. The Montana Veterans Home in Columbus Falls is full with 12 individuals on a waiting list and the nursing beds at the Miles City Hospital are also full with a waiting list. The D.A.V. and V.F.W. have approved and the American Legion has committed to giving approval to a State Nursing Home in Eastern Montana. Legislature Menchen has proposed trying again to convert the Galen State Hospital to a nursing home.

Concerning the V.A. Outpatient Clinic, there is a definite need for a clinic in Northwestern Montana offering same day treatment to veterans. The best location being either Kalispell or Missoula. Also, the Federal Government is proposing 4 mobile clinics. Mr. Brown has contacted U.S. Senator Max Baucus to procure one for Montana, however, to date, have had no response.

Rich related to the Board that the Governor's Office is working with individual to see what the State's needs are for older individuals including veterans. He asked the Board if they had any suggestions, to please let him know.

Gary Resfland, Gerontology Center in Bozeman, expressed his concerns about developing a new nursing home for veterans when there are care facilities closing from lack of patients. John Gallagher asked Mr. Resfland if a financial impact study had been done. Mr. Resfland replied no, not that he was aware of. John then went on to say that he feels its our responsibility to care for our older veterans and Mr. Brown added that the veterans would prefer to be in a facility with other veterans rather than being placed in a home with a large percent of the population being female. Gary's conviction remained that the veteran would rather stay in their own community.

Ray Secrop from Billings familiarized the Board with the project he undertaken, which is sending each Legislator or Legislative candidate a questionnaire on how they would deal with veterans issues. A copy of the questionnaire was handed out and the Board felt it was very informational. Ray also reported that the patient load at the Miles City Hospital has increased and felt it was due to the Service Officers advising veterans of their benefits. He commended

our Service Officers for doing a good job. Mr. Brown acknowledged the support that Mr. Seerup has given the Division saying we owe him a great deal of thanks.

Concerning the upgrading of the service officers and the administrative secretary position in Helena, Mr. Brown said the service officers positions had been done and sent to the State Personnel Office and he will pursue this. Bernice Opp then made a motion that the administrative secretary position be reclassified to a higher grade. Bob Durkee seconded the motion and it was carried. Mr. Brown asked the Board to specify what grade they felt the position should be reclassified to. After a brief discussion, Mr. Durkee proposed the position be a grade 12. The Board concurred.

Rich Brown advised the Board that Jerry Collins, Service Officer in Wolf Point is the V.F.W. State Commander this year. He has granted Jerry administrative leave for the necessary travel involved with being Commander. The Wolf Point office will be closed when he is traveling. Rich praised Jerry for the excellent job he has done for the Division. His report for May showed \$200,000 in benefits paid to veterans and dependents in his area. Jerry thanked the Board for their support and reaffirmed the V.F.W.'s position in favor of a State Veterans Nursing Home in Eastern Montana.

A report from Frank Kankelborg commended the work of all our Service Officers. Rich complemented Frank on his success rate with the cases he had brought before the traveling board of veterans appeals.

John Gallagher remarked that he sees very positive things from our Division.

Employees from the Great Falls, Miles City and Bozeman offices were invited to voice any problems they may be having. They were all affirmative of their offices.

Rich then related to the Board that the Merchant Marines were not included as veterans in Montana and would the Board's wishes be to seek legislation to include them? Bob Durkee made a motion to stay in line with the Federal Government and include, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

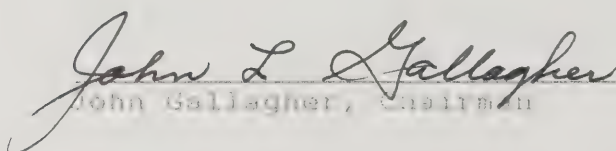
John Gallagher brought up the bi-laws for the Board and questioned if any of the members had had an opportunity to submit their suggestions. The answer was no so Chairman Gallagher asked that they try and get them submitted.

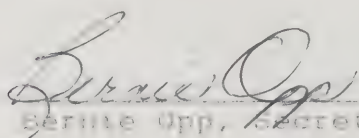
Ruddy Reilly, Service Officer from Great Falls who has completed 20 years with the Division was then presented with a letter of recognition signed by the Board members.

On July 21, 1988 there will be a public meeting in Miles City, sponsored by Congressman Ron Marlenee, concerning the shortfall of funding for the Miles City Hospital. Neil Shepherd made a motion to have Dale Pawlowski attend as a representative of the Board. Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

Rich Brown suggested that the Board hold their next meeting in Great Falls on September 16, 1988 to coincide with the ceremonies at Great Falls for the Ex-P.O.W.'s. Dale Pawlowski made a motion that the next meeting be held in Great Falls, at 2:00 P.M. on September 16, 1988, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.


John Gallagher, Chairman


Bernie Opp, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held on September 16, 1988 in Great Falls, Montana, to coincide with the MIA-POW ceremonies held in Great Falls on that date. The meeting was called to order by Chairman John Gallagher with the following members and guests present:

Bob Durkee, Vice Chairman
Bernie Opp, Secretary
Dale Pawlowski, Member
Rich Brown, Administrator

Frank Fankelborg, S.B.O.
Ruddy Reilly, S.O.
Jerry Collins, N.O.
Marie Hinman, Admin Sec.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as written.

The first item on the agenda was a report from Dale Pawlowski and Rich Brown regarding their meeting in Miles City with Congressmen Marlenee and Solomon concerning the budget for the Miles City V.A. Hospital. Dale stated that the meeting was well attended and very informative. The veterans had several complaints but were assured by the Congressmen that would get answer without delay. Rich concurred with Dale but added that the fee basis unit was having problems plus the V.A. has laid off all the temporary employee and living on a bare bones budget. He also added that Congressman Solomon was quite impressed with Montana and said the Congressman would be initiating legislation concerning travel. John Gallagher said he had visited with Congressman Marlenee after the meeting who felt the meeting was very productive.

Concerning the reclassification of the Service Officers, Rich said he has had responses from all four of the Service Officers that were asked to rewrite their job descriptions and also the Helena Administrative Secretaries position description has been rewritten. These will be submitted to the Personnel Division within the next two weeks. We will ask for an additional \$30,000.00 in the budget to cover these upgrades.

The next item on the agenda was an update on the cemetery. Rich reported that the rule amendments have been sent to the Secretary of States office and placed on the registrar. A copy of the amendment was given each member. Rich also relate to the Board that the widow of a deceased veteran who is buried at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery asked that any donations in memory of her husband be given to the Cemetery. To date we have received over \$700.00. A suggestion was made that something should be placed at the Cemetery and Funeral Homes indicating that the Cemetery is in need of donations. Jerry Collins informed the Board

that he has requested the V.F.W. posts to contribute to the Cemetery and the American Legion will also participate. Rich also reported that the Telephone Company Pioneers have taken on the project of collecting and planting trees for the Cemetery and a gentleman by the name of Tony Sullivan have volunteered to solicit donations for fertilizer plus watering the trees. He has also contacted Insty Prints in Helena and they will be asking posters, (free of charge) that will be distributed to those business who gave to the Cemetery, that will indicate the same. The Helena office is also sending thank you letters to every individual who has made a contribution to the cemetery. Bernie Opp posed the question as to the kind of trees that are needed for the cemetery. Rich replied that up until this point we have asked for evergreens, however suggestion have been made that we also plant some leaf trees. Rich also brought to the attention of Board that there is still controversy over the F.T.E. we have asked for to assist with the cemetery. The Governor's budget office has offered \$4,000.00 which we have disagreed with. No decisions have been made at this point in time. Bob Durkee related that he has just attended a convention of the Bar Tenders and Tavern Owners Association and they are going to propose to the Legislature for more expanded gambling with the profits going to a charitable organization. The Veterans Cemetery would be a logical candidate as the recipient. Dale Pawlowski then made a motion to endorse the cemetery rules as amended, Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

The statistics for the Division were then handed out. Rich noted that some offices are down from last year but with cause. Other offices have increased with Great Falls being the most productive. Jerry Collins noted that our service officers are actively involved in many areas helping veterans and the statistics do not reflect any monetary amount. Rich concurred and also pointed out that we assist many individuals without a power of attorney consequently we don't receive copies of award letters for our statistics. He also went on to say that through the efforts of our Division in getting veterans hospital and surgical benefits through the V.A. for heart transplants and other major medical problems, we are able to defray any cost to the States welfare and medical programs. Jerry Collins and Rudy Kelly also noted that tuition for vocational rehabilitation, fee basis payments, and claims that are done for veterans being discharged from the service who move out of State are unreportable. Rich then went on to say that the Veterans Administration spends one hundred million dollars in Montana and without our

Division, this figure would be reduced to nil. The Board and

Division, this figure would be reduced to nil. The Board was concerned on how to document these things to the legislature. Rich assured the Board that when the statistics are prepared we will make the necessary footnotes to reflect these facts.

On the Division budget, Rich reported that the budget for the this fiscal year will remain the same as last year with the exception of the \$4,000.00 audit fees which we will not be charged this year.

At this time Rich Brown, Administrator complimented Buddy Reilly and his Great Falls office for bringing their statistics up 36%. This is reflective of a job well done. Chairman Gallagher presented Buddy with a certificate, signed by Governor Schwinden, for 20 years of State service to the veterans of Montana.

Bob Durkee raised the question as to what States have turned over their service officer work to the Counties? Rich said he did not know but would try to find out.

Nominations were then opened for the election of new officers. Dale Pawlowski nominated Bob Durkee for Chairman. Bernie Opp seconded the nomination and it carried unanimously. Bob Durkee nominated Dale Pawlowski for Vice Chairman. Bernie Opp seconded the nomination and it was passed unanimously. Dale Pawlowski nominated Neil Shepherd as Secretary. Bob Durkee seconded the nomination, with the vote being unanimous. Rich asked the new officers to provide him with black and white photo to be used for a press release.

Concerning the bi-laws for the Board, Bernie Opp offered a preliminary outline to the Board. Bob Durkee volunteered to assist Marie Hinman in summarizing these suggestions to be presented at the next meeting.

Rich Brown discussed the lawsuit for wrongful discharge, filed against the Division by former employee Jim McNulty. Rich has consulted with the Attorney General's office and they have appointed Becky Smith as their attorney to act in our defense. Their preliminary opinion was in our favor as Mr. McNulty was discharged within the probationary period. Bernie Opp questioned if the Division would be charged for the services of the Attorney General's office. The answer was yes. Rich will keep the Board informed of any developments in the case.

Jerry Collins extended an invitation to those in

attendance to attend his homecoming with the V.F.W. on October 15, 1988, in Glasgow. He also made mention that the mid winter meeting will be the 1st Saturday in February at Helena.

Rich suggested to the Board that they hold their next meeting in Missoula to coincide with the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial in Rose Park on November 11, 1988. The Board accepted the proposal with the meeting being scheduled for November 10, 1988 at the Holiday Inn at 1:00 P.M.

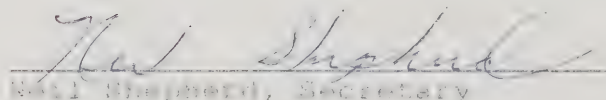
Bernie Opp mentioned that she had been contacted by Ken Wolfe who would like to do voluntary work with the Division by advising veterans of their benefits and making referrals to our offices. Mr. Brown said he would get in touch with Mr. Wolfe.

The last order of business centered around the speculation that our offices are being moved from the Armory Buildings to other locations due to the expansion of the National Guard. Rich informed the Board that he has a letter from General Duffy stating that no office will be moved without a direct order from him. The intention of the letter is to replace any supposition, with fact.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.



Robert Durkee, Chairman



Neil Shepherd, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held in Missoula, Montana on November 10, 1988 to coincide with the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Durkee at 1:30 P.M. with the following members and guests present:

Dale Pawlowski, Vice Chairman
 Neil Shepherd, Secretary
 Bernie Opp, Member
 John Gallagher, Member
 Rich Brown, Administrator

Frank Kankelborg, S.S.O.
 Marie Hinman, Adm. Sec.
 Len Leibinger, S.O.
 Sherrie Sander, Adm. Sec.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written.

The first item on the agenda concerned personnel changes within the Division. Administrator Brown informed the Board that the Service Officer in Bozeman, Dennis Pfaff, had resigned his position to take a job in Oregon. The Service Officer from Miles City, Pam Pedersen, has made known her desire to transfer to the Bozeman office. A motion was made by John Gallagher to allow Pam to transfer, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried. She will report to the Bozeman office on November 28, 1988. The vacant Service Officer position in Miles City was then discussed. Mr. Brown said the options would be to advertize for a Service Officer, fill the position with a training Service Officer or leave the position vacant. Frank Kankelborg made the suggestion that we transfer the Administrative Secretary from Butte as a training service officer to Miles City. He acknowledged that she was lacking both in the education and experience qualifications required for this position but contended that she was capable of doing the job as she had trained under him when he was the Service Officer in Butte. He also pointed out that Sherrie is a disabled veteran. John Gallagher asked Sherrie if had any comments she would like to make to the Board. She replied that she has worked in the Butte office for 2 1/2 years, put on workshops and addressed meetings on behalf of the Division. She is aware that she doesn't meet the qualifications however feels she could do the work. Bernie Opp pointed out that our Legislative Impact Statement implied we have trained people working in the Division and we have run into trouble by doing this very thing in the past. Rich made mention of the fact that our training service officer qualifications are different from a trained service officer qualifications. More discussion followed which ended in John Gallagher making a motion to promote Sherrie to a training service officer in Miles City, Bernie Opp asked if we train her by phone since its a one person office? The answer was "yes". Neil Shepherd then seconded the motion and it was carried with one opposing vote.

The meeting then turned to legislation. Rich advised the Board that on December 20, 1988, the veterans preference for Montana

veterans would end. Only those that were discharged within the last 15 years would have any preference. This will be a major issue at the Legislature. Rich would like to assign Frank Kankelborg to act on behalf of the Board and Division on any issues concerning the veterans preference. A review of many significant facts concerning past preference bills surfaced and the Board cautioned Frank that coordination between the veterans groups will be a major factor. Frank responded he would do whatever was necessary to make things work. Dale Pawlowski then made a motion to appoint Frank as their representative involving the veterans preference law, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

Legislative issues continued with the subject of the nursing home for Eastern Montana. Rich reported that everyone was very receptive to the idea but the location has been an issue of controversy. John said the Legislature will no doubt make the decision. The question of funding was raised and a suggestion was to use a portion of the cigarette tax which now goes to the long range building fund for the University System.

Rich also added that he has sponsors for a Bill that will include the 1st Special Service Force and Merchant Marines under Montana Law. A Federal Law corresponding will also be necessary.

The employee reclassification were then discussed. Rich informed the Board that the appropriate forms had been given to General Duffy for his signature to change the Helena Administrative Secretary position (Grade 10) to an Administrative Assistant IV position (Grade 12) and to raise the Service Officers from their present Grade 11 positions to a Grade 13. General Duffy has refused to sign any upgrades in positions. The options we have now are, 1. abolish the proposal, 2. an Attorney General opinion to have the Board sign the forms, 3. wait until January for the appointment of a new Adjutant General, or, 4. file a grievance. Bernie Opp suggested that we don't call attention to the Division at this point in time. Bob Durkee proposed we wait for the appointed of a new General and pursue at that time. Bernie Opp added that our priority at this time is to keep our funding and made a motion that we postpone action until the opportune time. Dale Pawlowski seconded the motion and it was carried.

Bernie then asked Administrator Brown if he had the opportunity to find out what States had turned the veterans claim work over to the Counties. He replied he had not found this information as yet but would pursue. He also mentioned that 49 out of the 50 States have a Veterans Affairs Division, with Wyoming being the only State that does not support a Division. Our Billings office takes does a lot of claims work for Wyoming veterans.

Under other business, Rich brought up the subject of the V.A. hospital in Miles City which will be bankrupt in March and also Fort Harrison will be out of money. He intimated that the removal of Jim Huff as the Director of the Miles City hospital may be something that is being considered, and proposed the Board may want to write a letter on behalf of Mr. Huff. Congressmen Marlenee and Baucus have said they will give their support but additional backing will be needed by Congress. Bernie Opp made a motion that Mr. Brown write such a letter on behalf of the Board, John Gallagher seconded the motion and it was carried.

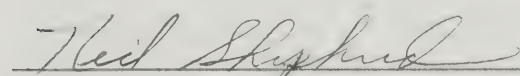
Rich apprised the Board that the Division sends Montana Flags and U.S. Flags to certain individual that request them. The letters that accompany the flags on written on behalf of the Board of Veterans Affairs.

The final draft of the Board of Veteran Affairs by-laws was distributed to each member for review. Neil Shepherd made a motion that the by-laws be adopted as written, Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried. These will be available for public information.

The next meeting will be called at the descretion of the Chairman. (February or March.)

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 P.M.


Bob Durkee, Chairman


Neil Shepherd, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held in Helena, Montana on February 17, 1989. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Durkee at 2:00 P.M. with the following members and guests present:

Dale Pawlowski, Vice Chairman
Neil Shepherd, Secretary
Rich Brown, Administrator
Marie Hinman, Admin. Sec.

Tony Cumming, A.L.
Fred Olson, V.F.W.
Jim Reibein, Guest

Members Bernadette Opp and John Gallgher were unable to attend.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written.

The first item on the agenda concerned the budget. Mr. Brown explained that at the present time we are only 54% spent on our current budget. This is due to vacancies within the Division. We anticipate spending approximately \$2500.00 of the surplus to update our computer equipment. Our present system is incapable of handling the volume of information we contemplate entering. Mr. Brown then distributed a copy of the budget for 1990-1991 and briefly explained the details. He also advised the Board that he has asked for spending authority for a 3/4 time employee to take care of the Cemetery. The salary would be approximately \$14,000 a year and would come out of the Cemetery monies. The starting date would be July 1, 1989.

Going on to the next item on the agenda, the Legislature was discussed. Those bills that focus on veteran issues include: tuition waivers for veterans at the Universities, extending dates on the Vietnam veteran to coincide with the American Legion, addition veteran nursing homes, the cigarette tax to fund the veteran nursing homes, the veteran preference bill, exempting agent orange settlements from Montana income tax, include the 1st Special Service Force and Merchant Marines as Montana veterans, and allowing veterans to hold raffles without paying fees. Also, the U.V.C. had approached a Legislature to sponsor a bill that would allow the U.V.C. to sell the vaults that are used at the Veterans Cemetery. The Bill was subsequently withdrawn. It also was erroneously reported that plots were being sold at the Montana Veterans Cemetery.

Jim Reibein asked if indigent veterans were buried the same as others. The answer was yes.

Rich also reported that SJR 21 was passed (asking Congress to put back veterans funds).

The next topic for discussion was the Miles City office. Sherrie Sanders was transferred to Miles City as a training service officer the first part of December, however she has only been in

the office approximately two weeks from the date she was scheduled to assume the duties of that office, until the present. She was granted leave without pay, (for health reasons) however, an analysis determined that Miles City had to have a full time trained service officer on duty to meet the needs of the veterans and their dependents in the community and surrounding area. A motion was made by Neil Shepherd to reorganize the policy of the Division and eliminate the training service officer in Miles City. Dale Pawlowski seconded the motion and it was carried. Dale suggested that we may want to look at North Dakota for a trained service officer. Rich said we may be able to get applications from the Wyoming area also.

Administrator Brown then asked the Board for approval to be able to refer to Frank Kankelborg, Senior Service Officer and the Assistant Administrator in his absence. (Mr. Brown will be traveling to Washington, D.C.). The Board had no objection.

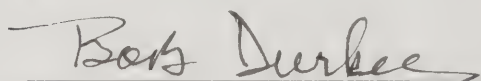
Jim Reibein, who is the State Commander of the Disabled American Veterans was then called upon for any comments. He wished to discuss the well at the Veterans Cemetery. He pointed out that we may want to investigate the water rights issues and file with the Department of Natural Resources.

Bob Durkee and Rich Brown reported they had met with General Blair, the new Adjutant for the Department of Military Affairs. They felt he will be most supportive of the Division. It was also noted that Bob Ellard and Glen Marx, appointments in the Governor's office are also veteran supporters.

It was also noted that the Service Organizations or anyone else wishing a copy of the minutes of the Board meetings will be forwarded the same, upon request.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 5th, at 2:00 P.M. in Great Falls. The will coincide with the D.A.V. Convention being held there during this time.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:45 P.M.



Bob Durkee, Chairman



Neil Shepherd, Secretary

April 28, 1989

The Honorable Mike Cooney
Secretary of State
State Capitol
Helena, Montana 59601

Dear Secretary Cooney:

Please be informed that, effective May 18, 1989, I have reappointed Neil Shepherd, Chester, Montana 59522 to the Board of Veterans' Affairs in accordance with Section 2-15-1205, MCA.

Mr. Shepherd will serve a term ending May 18, 1994.

Sincerely,

STAN STEPHENS
Governor

cc: General Blair

bcc: Rich Brown

ADJUTANT GENERAL

MAY 03 1989

RECEIVED

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held in Great Falls, Montana on May 5, 1989. Chairman Durkee called the meeting to order at 2:00 P.M. with the following members and guests present:

Dale Pawlowski, Vice Chairman	Rich Brown, Administrator
Neil Shepherd, Secretary	Marie Hinman, Adm. Sec.
John Gallagher, Member	Frank Kankelborg, S.S.O.
Bernie Opp, Member	

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written.

The first order of business addressed the legislative session. Copies of all bills that concerned veteran issues were passed out. HB 700 - Employment preference did pass, however it applies to initial hire only. Also the bill was amended to include a clause to sunset the Bill in two years. If no problems arise during the respective 2 year period, the sunset clause will be removed. Other bills that passed include HB 202 (\$.02 cigarette tax to help fund construction of a veteran nursing home), HB 547 (Construct a veteran nursing home in Eastern Montana. Governor will appoint a 7 member panel to study) SB 356 (To grant the 1st Special Service Force and Merchant Marines, veteran status in Montana. This Bill will also define veteran, which has never been done before. SJR8 asks for Federal Legislation to grant the same benefits. Representative Pat Williams has introduced this Legislation.) SB 304 (free tuition and waivers at the University system changed to read that the individual must be a Montana resident) HB 545 (Agent Orange Settlement not taxable - HB 114 (Lengthen term of VietNam Era to include 12-61 to 8-64) The D.A.V.'s sponsored Bill to exempt veterans organizations from paying fees for raffles etc.

Frank Kankelborg wished the Board to be aware that although they had appointed him to represent the Division on the Veterans Preference Issue, Administrator Brown was recognized and respected at the Legislature so he therefore asked Mr. Brown, who accepted, to assume his position on the preference Bill.

Bob Durkee felt the Board owed Rich a healthy vote of confidence. The veterans have never had the magnitude for veteran issues in the past. Rich thanked the Board and concluded that everyone worked together to get the job done.

The Division has also been funded for the next two years. Rich commented that the Service Organization were most supportive. We have been authorized \$490,000 each year. We were also given the spending authority to hire a 3/4 individual to take care of the cemetery duties. Suggestions were made to investigate hiring a Green Thumb, Stay in School or a welfare recipient. The question

came up on why the trees that were offered were not planted at the cemetery. Rich said that we do not have the man power to plant the trees ourselves. The Telephone Company Pioneers have taken on the project. He noted that many of the trees that were planted did not survive. Bob Durkee suggested that we should talk to the Judges and have individuals convicted of certain charges (D.U.I.) do community service work at the cemetery. Rich said he would check into this also.

Neil Shepherd announced that he had been reappointed to the Board for another term. Also, Bernie Opp and Dale Pawlowski had their appointments confirmed by the Senate.

Concerning the Service Officer opening in Miles City, the position has been advertized. We have received 5 application. (Given to the Board to review). Rich said he has received reports that Sherrie had left the Miles City office in disarray. Unanswered letters, claims not completed, filing not done, reports not submitted, etc). The new individual will have a backlog to catch up on. We will have to send a support person to Miles City to straighten things out. It was noted that the position will be filled immediately.

Rich pointed out that the Legislature has eliminated the vacancy savings which is a big plus for our Division.

John asked if we have a representative on the Department of Labor and Industry Board. Rich said the idea died due to conflict between veterans organizations and the new Governor was not receptive. The new Administration has named the Board of Veterans Affairs as their Veteran Advisory Board.

A suggestion was made to create a program that would give honorary awards to veterans for outstanding service. Rich said it was his intention to present Roosevelt County with a plaque for their generosity and support of the Division. They provide us with free office space and unlimited phone service.

John Gallagher said he feels we need publicity to separate the Veterans Administration from the Veterans Affairs Division.

Rich said he intends to take a proposal to the new General to get our positions upgraded.

He also suggested that the Board write a letter to Sharon Krebs complimenting her on her performance during the absence of Marie. Bernie Opp made a motion, Dale Pawlowski seconded the motion and it was carried.

The Board also noted they are sending letters to Kathy Sparr and James Huff thanking them for their contribution and support for the veterans of Montana. Copies will be sent to the Congressional Delegation and also the V.A. Administrator.

John Gallagher made mention that Senator Mitchell from Maine was in Montana. The veterans groups gave him special recognition and he was most appreciative.

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday July 7th, at 2:00 P.M. in Havre, Montana.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:15 P.M.

Robert A. Durkee

Robert Durkee, Chairman

Neil Shepherd

Neil Shepherd, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held in Havre, Montana on the 7th day of July, 1989. Chairman Durkee called the meeting to order at 2:00 P.M. with the following members and guests present.

Bernie Opp, Member
Neil Shepherd, Member
John Gallagher, Member

Rich Brown, Administrator
Marie Hinman, Adm. Sec.
Frank Kankelborg, Sen. S.O.
Pam Pederson, S.O.

It was noted that Dale Pawlowski was unable to attend due to a prior commitment.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written.

The first order of business concerned Rich Brown wishing to advise the Board that he had been approached by a group of veterans seeking his help to override the veto of a 40 bed veterans nursing wing at Galen. He rejected their request.

A report from Mr. Brown on the Eastern Montana Nursing Home entailed his advising the Board that Lt. Governor Kolstad called and asked him to recommend names to serve on the site selection committee. Five of the seven individuals he suggested were appointed. The committee consists of 10 persons, seven voting members and three non-voting members. The seven voting members are: Roy Dalrymple (Billings); James Lucas (Miles City); Senator Swede Hammond (Malta); Johnny Buck (Glendive); Board member Dale Pawlowski (Circle); Ken Hannah (Havre) and Lloyd Eide (Glasgow). The 3 non-voting members are: Curt Chisholm, Director of the Dept. of Institutions; Tom O'Connell, Administrator, Architecture and Engineering; and Rich Brown, Administrator, Veterans Affairs Division, all of Helena. The committee will hold 3 meetings, the first being tentatively scheduled for August 24th or 25th. There is a definite time frame the committee must adhere to. The State will pay 1.4 million towards the cost with a Federal Government match of 2.6 million. If the Federal Government fails to come up with their share, the State will withdraw. Due to the sparse population in some locations a major problem that should be looked at is the availability of doctors and nurses to work in the home. John Gallagher raised the question that if the home were near a V.A. hospital, would this create a problem? The answer was negative. Bob Durkee inquired about how many bids have come in to date and how many does the committee expect? Rich answered that to date there have been three bids (Glasgow, Glendive and Miles City) but could get as many as ten. John wondered how many personnel it would take to operate the home. Rich thought it would be a one on one. He said the Veterans Administration has very strict rules concerning patient care. Bob Durkee remarked that he thought this is a tremendous program and is happy that the Board can be a part of it.

The next order of business entailed a brief discussion on the V.A. budget supplements. Rich said that Fort Harrison has received 306 thousand dollars and will be able to treat category B and C patients. Miles City received 106 thousand. Miles City will be only able to treat emergency cases after July 1st even with the supplement.

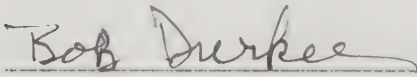
Under the heading of other business, Bernie inquired if the Service Organization's busses were still running? Rich answered "yes" in fact another bus has been added for Lincoln County.

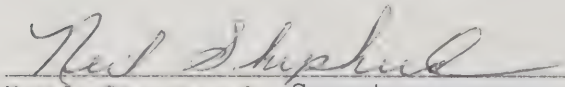
In the folders given each Board members was material from Congressman Pat Williams concerning the 1st Special Service Force. Rich explained that this is not really what we wanted and we have asked for an amendment. We have not heard back yet.

The last order of business brought before the Board concerned moving offices. The Department of Military Affairs wants our office out of the Armory in Bozeman. We have negotiated with the Department of Labor to move our office to their building in Bozeman and also perhaps move our Great Falls office to the Department of Labor in Great Falls. (The Great Falls move would save rent) After inspecting both buildings, it was determined that neither location would be adequate for our needs. We will work on obtaining suitable space. In Billings our office is in the Vets Center building which is being torn down. They would like us to move into their new building when it is complete. We will be moving back to the clinic until the Vets Center is ready. (They have discussed a time frame of perhaps 90 days.)

The next meeting will be held in Billings to coincide with the M.I.A/P.O.W. recognition ceremonies. The date is September 15th, the time is 2:00 P.M. and the place will be the Billings Sheraton.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:45 P.M.


Bob Durkee, Chairman


Neil Shepherd, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held in Billings Montana on September 15, 1989. The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Bob Durkee with the following members and guests present:

Bernie Opp, Member	Rich Brown, Administrator
Dale Pawlowski, Vice Chairman	Marie Hinman, Admin Sec.
John Gallagher, Member	Frank Kankelborg, S.S.O.
Neil Shepherd, Secretary	

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written.

Nominations were then opened for election of new officers for the coming year. Neil Shepherd nominated Dale Pawlowski for Chairman, Bernie Opp for Vice Chairman and John Gallagher for Secretary. Bob Durkee seconded the nominations. A vote was taken and these individuals were elected to each respective office by a unanimous decision.

Governor Stephens has requested that all agencies set aside 6% of their personnel services budget and 2% of their operating budget. General Blair has proposed the Veterans Affairs Division and Disaster and Emergency Services be exempt and that their share be paid from Department money saved through utilities. If this is not acceptable, we will have to lay off one employee and save the excess elsewhere. Bernie Opp asked when we would know and where the rest of the money would come from? Rich replied we should know soon, there will be a meeting within the next two weeks and the money would probably be saved by suspending travel for the rest of the year. Other possibilities would be to lay off the last person hired, or cut positions back to 1/2 time. If this were to happen, a special meeting of the Board would be called.

The statistics for last year were distributed. Rich noted that the money was down about 4% from last year but that was not bad considering the total monetary benefits acquired for veterans and their dependents by our Division, was over 17 million dollars for the year.

John Gallagher asked what the ratio was on the return of money spent? Rich replied that for every dollar of State money spent to run the Division, \$40.00 was returned to the community in V.A. money.

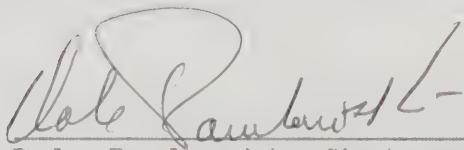
Turning to the next order of business, Rich explained that Washington State had pioneered a program that transferred eligible individuals from Medicaid to V.A. pensions and has saved the State about 15 million dollars. Rich said he had tried to develop such a program for Montana through the Governor's Council on Aging but no one was responsive. Now the S.R.S. Department had contacted us to work with them to start this program in Montana. Rich pointed out to the budget director, Dave Darby,

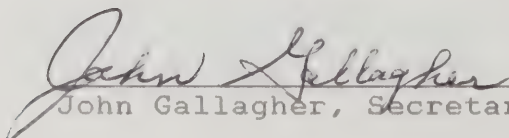
that our Division has been given the responsibility of the Veterans Cemetery, the Eastern Montana Nursing Home and now this new medicaid program, and at the same time cut personnel. If we take on this program we will need a budget supplement to include addition travel, education and a referral service. This could in all probability save 1 million dollars on a single patient (heart transplant given as an example) by using the Veterans Administration rather than medicaid.

Moving on to the next item on the agenda, Dale Pawlowski reported that the Eastern Montana Nursing Home committee met in Glendive on the 24th of August. Jim Lucas was appointed Chairman. A criteria has been adopted by the committee and is available to those that are interested. Dale said he felt the press coverage was not really factual and he had been asked to write a letter, however he declined saying he would answer any questions but would remain non-committal. The deadline for applying is December 1, 1989 and this was published in every newspaper in Eastern Montana. A temporary secretary has been hired in the Helena office and is being paid out of the Eastern Montana Nursing Home monies. After the bids are opened, the committee will visit every community that applies. The next meeting has been set for January to set up a travel schedule.

The last order of business, Rich requested Board approval to hold the next meeting in Lewistown or a similar central location on December 8, 1989, with the entire staff in attendance. The staff would convene on the previous day (Dec. 7th) at 1:00 P.M. and any or all Board members who would like to be there can do so at their own discretion. Bernie Opp made a motion to hold the next meeting in Lewistown on December 8th, Dale Pawlowski seconded the motion and it was carried.

There being no further business, the regular meeting adjourned at 3:30 P.M. The Board then went into a short executive session to discuss personnel matters.


Dale Pawlowski, Chairman


John Gallagher, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Dale Pawlowski on December 8, 1989 in Lewistown Montana at 9:00 A.M. The meeting was in connection with a training meeting of the staff of the Veterans Affairs Division.

The following members were present:

Bernie Opp, Vice Chairman	Rich Brown, Administrator
John Gallagher, Secretary	Marie Hinman, Adm. Sec.
Bob Durkee, Member	Frank Kankelborg, S.S.O
Neil Shepherd, Member	V.A.D. Staff

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written.

Before the regular meeting began, Chairman Pawlowski wished to point out that the press has given erroneous coverage concerning the veterans nursing home and for the record, the recommendations of the committee are binding and cannot be amended by the Governor.

For the first order of business, Rich Brown stated that the V.F.W. has requested that the minutes of the Board meetings be printed in their monthly newspaper. The Board had no objection.

Continuing on to the next item on the agenda, Rich Brown reported to the Board that the Department of Veterans Affairs (Veterans Administration) has started a policy whereby they are no longer supplying medications to Category A veterans who are non-service connected. They are giving veterans a 15 day supply and telling them they will have to purchase their drugs at a local pharmacy. In November alone, 70 veterans were dropped from the rolls. We are working with our Congressional delegation to try to turn this around. Senator Conrad Burns has made known his intentions to visit the V.A. at Fort Harrison. Rich suggested that a formal investigation be requested. John Gallagher made a motion that the Board of Veterans Affairs ask for a formal investigation, Bernie Opp seconded the motion. Bob Durkee suggested the motion be amended to state that if satisfaction is not reached with Conrad Burns visit, then ask for a formal investigation. John Gallagher amended the motion to read, a formal investigation will be requested if satisfaction is not achieved, Bernie Opp seconded the amended motion and it was passed.

On the Veterans Nursing Home Project in Eastern Montana, Rich reported that 10 applications have been received. The committee has a meeting scheduled for January 8th. The three non-voting members will meet before that date to set up a suggested points system and make recommendations to the committee for the public hearings. On or before April 1, 1990, the committee will make a binding recommendation to the Governor.

Dale Pawlowski asked that if anyone sees any articles that pertain to the nursing home, to send them to Rich. It's a veterans home and we need to know what the veterans want. Jerry Collins said he would straighten out a newspaper article which erroneously reported the employees would be V.A. instead of State. Barbara Palmer questioned how the Governor would be notified. Chairman Pawlowski's answer was that it would be a committee decision. John Gallagher inquired about a formal spokesman for the committee. Chairman Pawlowski responded that it was the ethics of the people involved as to personal opinions, anything else will come from the Chairman of the Committee. Pam Pedersen mentioned she has had several inquiries as to the cities that have applied. Chairman Pawlowski said she could request a list from the Helena office.

At this time a copy of the current financial update of the Division was passed out. Administrator Brown noted that communications and repairs were over expended with all other items being within the budgeted amounts. The money allocated for the cemetery is spending authority only and \$30,000 appropriated for the site selection of the Eastern Montana Veterans Nursing Home is not included. Rich noted that 42% of the time has elapsed with 38% of the budgeted money spent however if the excess is in payroll, the money cannot be moved into operations.

Bernie Opp brought up the subject of the National Guard needing our office space in Bozeman and they would like us to relocate. Rich Brown indicated that he is aware of the situation but because of unforeseen expenses, we are not financially able to rent other space at this time. The Job Service in Bozeman has space available but it will have to be renovated to meet our needs. General Blair and his staff have been very cooperative. Bernie said she had been discussing the situation with Col. Darrah and asked Rich to meet with him concerning the situation. Rich said he would.

Rich Brown related that we are approaching the 50th anniversary of World War II and General Blair will be starting preparations. Also, in 1990 will be the 50th anniversary of the National Guard being activated.

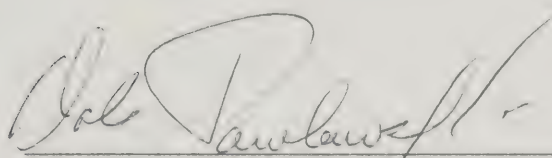
Rich asked the Board what their pleasure would be concerning a date for the next meeting. He referred to the Women Veterans Day at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls being set for April 20, 1990. The Board's opinion was to tentatively schedule the meeting for that date in Great Falls.

At this time Neil Shepherd petitioned the Board to hold an executive session at the end of the regular meeting. All members agreed.

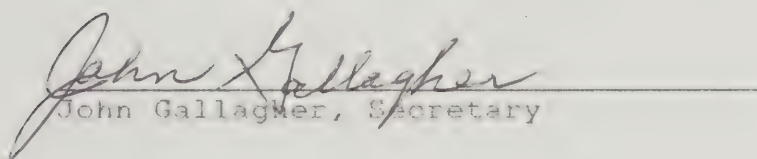
Before the meeting closed, individual Board members thanked the employees of the Division for a job well done and expressed a desire to schedule another joint meeting in the future.

There being no further business, the regular meeting adjourned.

The Board then retired into an executive session.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dale Pawlowski", written over a horizontal line.

Dale Pawlowski, Chairman

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Gallagher", written over a horizontal line.

John Gallagher, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Dale Pawlowski at 2:00 pm on April 25, 1990 in Billings, Montana. The following members and guests were present:

Bernie Opp, Vice Chairman	Rich Brown, Administrator
John Gallagher, Secretary	Wayne Hill, Senior Service Officer
Bob Durkee, Member	Marie Hinman, Adm. Secretary
Neil Shepherd, Member	Cheryl Heald, Service Officer
	Carol Gallagher, Guest

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written.

Before the regular order of business began, Rich Brown brought up the fact that the V.F.W. had requested the minutes of the Board meeting be submitted to them for publication in their paper, which he said is not a problem. The question is whether the Board would want unapproved minutes or only approved minutes published. If only approved minutes are sent, there would be approximately a three month time lag. A discussion followed with the end result being a motion by John Gallagher that the minutes be forwarded to each Board member immediately following the meeting. If there were no corrections then they will be sent on as approved. If there are corrections to be made they will be withheld pending approval by the entire Board. Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

The first order of business was the financial report. A copy of the expenditure summary (as of April 1, 1990) for the Division was distributed to each member. A review by Rich Brown indicated that in personnel services there are sufficient funds to run until June 30th; in communications, with 75% of the time elapsed, 90% of the budgeted amount has been spent; and in travel we have expended \$20,000 of the \$26,000 amount budgeted. As a result of this, the offices has been notified only to make emergency phone calls and to stop all travel for the month of June. If any of you receive complaints that our Service Officers are not traveling or not making call backs this is the reason. The other funds are running basically what they should be for the year. He pointed out that the money for the Cemetery is spending authority, however there has not been enough cash generated to hire a 3/4 time person yet. Dale questioned if we have received many donations. Rich replied that we have had some donation money but those funds are set aside for construction and we hope to have a second plan ready by the next meeting for addition construction at the Cemetery. The operating funds come from the \$150.00 V.A. plot allowance. The cost to have the grave opened and closed is \$135.00 for a full size grave, first burial, and \$75.00 for the second burial in the same full size grave. The difference between that and \$150.00 is our operating money. When we have a cremated human remains, it costs \$28.00 to have

the grave opened with the cemetery sexton closing it. We make \$122.00 on each of these. The money we are netting from these burials is not sufficient to hire a person for more than a few hours a week nor is it sufficient to take care of the operating expenditures that we currently have at the Cemetery. Chairman Pawlowski asked if there were any questions of Rich on the budget. Bernie Opp referred to the upgrading of the Service Officer positions and the Administrative Secretary position in Helena that was requested in November 1988. She said this still pending but she realizes that there are no monies available. Rich affirmed the lack of funding for upgrading the Service Officers. He went on to say that we are paying part of the cost of contracting with a private personnel consultant to write new job descriptions. The consultant feels it would be fairly easy to move the service officers from a grade 11 to a grade 12 but difficult to move them to the 13 level because of the general supervisory skills that are required on a grade 13. This normally includes supervising a minimum of 3 people. We are proceeding slowly on this but hopefully we will get it done right so we can get it in on the next budget and when the legislature meets it can be approved through them. One of the other things we will be doing in the next year is providing budgets for each Service Officer and they will be responsible for maintaining a sub budget under the major budget. Presently we have a break down for payroll, communication and travel but supplies, repairs and maintenance are not separated out. The question was asked if we plan to move the Great Falls office in with the Job Service, the answer being no, the facility was not satisfactory, however, we plan to soon be moving the Bozeman office to the Bozeman Job Service due to the reorganization of the Guard.

Moving to the next item on the agenda Rich Brown apprised the Board that the Division is now working with S.R.S. and the Medicaid program. (A list of the meetings that are being held around the State was passed out.) What we are doing is following the lead of the State of Washington whereby they were able to save about 15 million dollars in medicaid benefits by identify veterans and veteran spouses and getting them on Federal V.A. pensions and aid and attendance instead of drawing on the State medicaid funds. This is what we hope to start in Montana and we think we can save the State a good deal of money by doing this plus we feel the veteran or veteran spouse would rather be receiving money under an earned entitlement rather than under the basic welfare program. Our service officers are attending meetings with S.R.S. informing the care providers what V.A. benefits are available plus developing a referral system so that we can track how much we have reduced the medicaid expense and increased the flow of additional Federal dollars into the State of Montana. There is a potential for a multi-million dollar savings to the State of Montana by expanding this program. This

may require additional Legislation next year to either provide us with additional staff and/or work out a system of coordinating computers with S.R.S. John Gallagher asked if we had any savings figures yet? Rich answered no, but S.R.S. is starting to track these cases and by January we should have some type of figure. Dale Pawlowski mentioned he had not seen any publicity. Rich replied that there won't be any publicity as this is strictly between providers at this time to work out the details.

Moving on to the next order of business, Rich explained to the Board that at the American Legion National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation convention in Washington D.C. this last year, he met with Mike DeArco who is the Director of Veterans Affairs in New Mexico. They have a program in operation whereby they sell a license plate for \$15.00 that says "I am a New Mexico Armed Forces veteran". \$7.00 of that money goes back to their State Department of Motor Vehicles to pay the cost of the license plate and the other \$8.00 is specifically identified revenue that goes to the State of New Mexico to pay for veterans programs. We would like to see something like this happen in Montana. We would like to see the \$8.00 or a substantial portion of the \$8.00 go to the Montana State Veterans Cemetery. We are generating numerous complaints about the cemetery because we are not moving fast enough as far as landscaping, maintenance, and having a full time caretaker. He noted that we now have over 100 burials and we owe the veterans to make this the best we possibly can. Bernie Opp asked if the plates would be for strictly veterans and Rich answered that we would like to sell them to anyone in case the spouse would like to put one on her car. It wouldn't be a specific veteran benefit as these people would be paying a charge to buy a plate and we would like to sell as many plates as possible if we can get this legislation through. There is already legislation in place that allows for specialized license plates within the University System so we may be able to amend current legislation to get a specific license plate that way. Rich asked for Board concurrence to move ahead so by the time the legislature meets we will have done the research on this to see if we can amend the current existing bill or if we have to develop our own. We would meet with the Department of Motor Vehicles to find out specifics so by the next Board meeting he will have all the facts necessary if we wish to pursue this option. Neil Shepherd made a motion to give Rich Brown the authority to look into this, Bernie Opp seconded the motion. Chairman Pawlowski asked if there was any further discussion. John Gallagher added that we would want to specify that this money would be exclusive cemetery money and not part of the Veterans Affairs Division operating budget. A vote was then taken and the motion carried.

Under other business, Rich told the Board he has attended a number of meetings in Governor Stephens office to plan the traditional Memorial Day (May 30th) as one on the larger ceremonies in the State of Montana for Memorial Day and specifically toward honoring the seven previous Congressional Medal of Honor recipients from the State. Letters have gone to the major veterans organization to solicit addition funds for a large plaque that will be placed on the Capitol grounds. They will also have the Marine Corps Silent Drill Team from Bangor, Washington and the Air Force Band from McChord Air Force Base, cannons firing, music playing making May 30th an exceptionally big day in Montana. Also, some well know speakers have been invited from across the United States but have not had confirmation on these yet. Rich is hopeful that there will be an extremely large gathering in Helena on May 30th and asked the Board to help get the word out.

Chairman Pawlowski then asked if there was some way to get the word out to the veterans and widows concerning their entitlements. He attended a meeting in Medicine Lake where Jerry Collins, Service Officer for the Veterans Affairs Division and Fred Olson, National Service Officer for the Veterans of Foreign Wars conducted a workshop. He said many questions were raised by those in attendance but he questioned how do you get the word out to those that don't attend. Rich said that we have a program in operation through the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars putting on veteran workshops across the State. Rich said that in Billings there were over 900 people, Great Falls had 600 people, Missoula had over 300 and Bozeman had only about 100 people. Dale asked if this could be worked in with the S.R.S. meetings but Rich felt not because of the Service Organization involvement. Rich said part of the problem is the veteran is not seeking information until the time comes when he needs it. John Gallagher had tried get veterans groups to supply him with information to have printed in the Havre newspaper but it was never developed due to lack of participation. He felt the veterans awareness program is helping to stimulate interest.

Dale also brought up that Barbara Palmer in Miles City had inquired about furthering education for Service Officers. Dale called the Veterans Training Institute in Denver to see what they had to offer. They sent him (and also Rich Brown) literature concerning their program. It is available at a cost is about \$1,000 a week. Dale suggested it be taken to the Veterans Organization to create a fund to send individuals for training. He felt this a very worth while program. Rich added that he also felt this was a good program plus we used to send Service Officers to the insurance training program but at the present time we don't have the man power or budget to participate.

Rich Brown then addressed the fact that State law requires that we do a performance appraisal on all of our employees at least once a year and we have not done this for several years. He advised that he is working out a program with our personnel consultant, Jim Nys, who used to be with the State of Montana, Personnel Division, where we will be visiting with our Service Officers and developing standards on what we expect in terms of conduct and performance. This should be done within the next three or four weeks. Following that we will be doing a performance appraisal on everyone within the Division. The employee will then have a chance to respond and both of those documents will be retained in their personnel file. Rich surmised the Board would be the one to do his appraisal and that could be done at the next Board meeting. One of advantages to having these standards would be a means of correcting any substandard work or performance by any employee. At the present time we have no way of grading or reviewing them in terms of conduct because there are no defined policies other than the obvious ones. Rich hopes to have these complete by the next Board meeting.

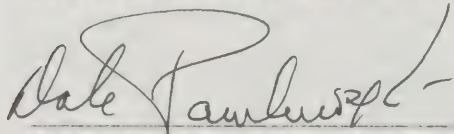
Concerning the Eastern Montana Nursing Home Site Selection Committee's choice of Glendive. All opposition for the selected site has appeared to have diminished, there are no suits filed to date and he is not aware of any anticipated suits. He will be meeting with the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars in Miles City who plan to set aside funds to buy a handicapped accessible bus to transport veterans between Glendive and Miles City. Also, the Vietnam Memorial Committee in Missoula will be donating the original 5 foot statue to the Eastern Montana Veterans Nursing Home in Glendive, and there has been many other offers of donations for the new home from other Veterans Organizations. The State of Montana, Department of Architecture and Engineers, has hired C.T.A. Engineering Firm out of Billings to get the plans ready so we can have them submitted no later than July 1, 1990 to the Veterans Administration. Senator Conrad Burns is supporting legislation that would move the V.A. annual amount for construction of State Nursing Homes from 40 to 60 million dollars. Both of our Senators have been in contact with the Department of Veterans Affairs officials and it looks like October 1, 1990, we will have the 2.6 million match from the Federal Government to get the program started. Because Montana does have the third highest number of veterans per capita, had the first application in for this year and has never received any construction money before, our priority should be near the top. Dale Pawlowski added that as a member of the committee he felt it was an interesting and rewarding experience and in his opinion the home could have been built in any of the nine locations. He felt veteran attendance at the hearings had an effect on the choice and complimented Mr. Jim Lucas of the outstanding job he did as Chairman of the committee.

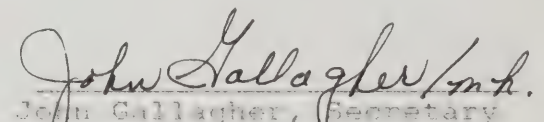
Dale turned his attention to Wayne Hill, the new Senior Service Officer and asked if he had anything he wished to say to the Board. Wayne replied it was a little early to make any comments but felt things are going well and the job is what he expected it to be. Dale disclosed that he had heard favorable comments about Wayne in Eastern Montana.

John Gallagher wished to say before the meeting adjourned, that he felt this would be the last meeting he would be attending as his term of office was up and the Governor was appointing another individual. He said he had really enjoyed working with the Board and felt the new member should take on the project of veterans within the State and wished him well. He will continue to work toward the good of veterans and wished the Division continued success. The rest of the Board members told John that he will be missed and has done a good job on the Board. They wished him good luck in his future endeavors.

The last order of business, Rich passed out copies of the last V.A. statistics which reflect a 7,000 drop in veteran population in Montana and now stands at 100,000. (V.A. is using a migration method to come up with this figure). Also the Division statistics were viewed and Rich explained that all offices were running pretty close with the exception of Great Falls which is exceeding and will probably due around 5 millions dollars in business this year.

That concluding the regular order of business, the meeting adjourned into an executive session.


Dale Sawlowski, Chairman


John Gallagher, Secretary

State of Montana
Office of the Governor
Helena, Montana 59620
406-444-3111

STAN STEPHENS
GOVERNOR

May 1, 1990

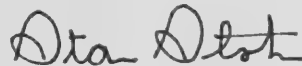
The Honorable Mike Cooney
Secretary of State
State Capitol
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Secretary Cooney:

Please be informed that effective May 18, 1990 I have appointed the following to the Board of Veterans' Affairs in accordance with Section 2-15-1205, MCA, under the Department of Military Affairs.

Mr. Ruben McKinney, Box 2627, Havre, MT, 59501 is to serve a term ending May 18, 1995, and fulfills the requirement for being an honorably discharged veteran. Mr. McKinney succeeds Mr. John L. Gallagher.

Sincerely,



STAN STEPHENS
Governor

✓ cc: Rich Brown



A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Dale Pawlowski on July 13, 1990 in Helena, Montana at 2:00 P.M. The following members and guests were present:

Bernie Opp, Vice Chairperson
 Neil Shepherd, Member
 Ruben McKinney, Member
 Rich Brown, Administrator
 Wayne Hill, S.S.O.

Marie Hinman, Adm. Sec.
 Carol Code, Adm. Sec.
 Pam Pedersen, S.O.
 Ruddy Reilly, S.O.
 A.L. members

Before the business meeting began, Chairman Pawlowski welcomed new Board member Ruben McKinney from Havre. Ruben was appointed by Governor Stephens to replace John Gallagher who had completed his five year term.

A motion was made by Neil Shepherd to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Ruben McKinney seconded the motion and it was carried.

The first order of business was a review of the closing budget for 1989-90. Rich passed out a copy of the budget and noted a few minor changes before it is finalized. We are 95% spent but have a few claims that have not been paid. There will be some money left over in personnel service, however, this excess is due a turnover in personnel. The new individuals starting salary is less than what we were budgeted for thus creating a surplus. This money cannot be transferred to operating expenses or used to hire additional employees as we are locked into our current number of F.T.E.'s. Rich also noted that some items were overspent which resulted in cancelling travel for June and restricting long distant phone calls for May and June. Rich also pointed out that the expenses have been broken down for each office but only include travel, communications, and personnel services. We hope to assign a further breakdown next year to include supplies and equipment. Each office will be furnished a copy of their budget at the beginning of the year and will be more or less expected to live within these figures. This of course will be flexible and monies can be transferred from one office to another.

The cemetery budget was also reviewed. The income for the cemetery is totally federally funded with the money coming from the V.A. plot allowance. We receive \$150.00 for each burial but it costs us \$135.00 for opening and closing a full size gravesite and \$28.00 for a cremated size gravesite. (There is no State money to operate the cemetery.) The small margin of profit from the burial allowance is being used to partially fund a position (20 hours a week) that was given to us by the Legislature, for a

cemetery sexton. The budgeted amount shown is spending authority and not actual revenue. Ruben McKinney asked if there has been any type of trust fund established so people can make a memorial contribution to the cemetery for individuals that are buried there. Rich answered yes, that in fact we recently had a gentleman that has left his veterans group life insurance to the cemetery plus we have been notified by a lady veteran that she has designated some C.D.'s to be donated to the cemetery upon her death. We have received a fair amount of contributions from the veterans organizations and are using some of that money to maintain operations of the cemetery. Rich has just sent out letters to the major veterans organizations and their auxiliary to select a member to sit on a cemetery committee and he hopes that by the next meeting one of those groups will have set up an account whereby they are taking all the cemetery contributions. The problems that we have now, for example, is that if someone gives us \$5.00 for the sod fund we cannot go out and buy sod. We have to wait for the right time of year for the State to bid on sod, tell them exactly how much money we have and how many square feet of sod we wish to purchase, then go to the lowest bidder and make arrangements for that bidder to install it. If the veterans groups gives up \$5.00 worth of sod we can just simply lay the sod and skip all the red tape. We also have about \$7,000.00 in revenue check off money that we are holding to get a \$14,000 match giving us \$21,000.00 to do some construction. By law when the revenue check-off was passed, the money was restricted to construction. With the approval of the committee and this Board, we hope to build a west wall on the center circle where we will be holding all the services. Also, as you recall the Board did endorse a request for legislation for veteran licence plates for additional funding for the cemetery. This will be structured standard income so we can hire someone to take care of the cemetery business. Yesterday about 75% of the mail that came into the office concerned the cemetery. Its getting to be a major function where we need someone to help with it.

The Division statistics for fiscal year 1989/1990 were the next item on the agenda. A copy of the statistics were handed out. A comparison between fiscal year 1988 and 1989 was made which showed a 10% increase in benefits this Division obtained for veterans. A great deal was due to the new Service Officer in Miles City as well as Billings and Great Falls. Great Falls continues to be our leading office in terms of awards. They do an outstanding job and should be highly commended. The other offices continue to run equal for the last couple of years. The drop in the Missoula office could be a recording problem. They are not tracking closely enough when a hard copy of the award is not issued. This centers mostly around E.V.R.s. We are also

working with the people from the Social and Rehabilitation Services who are referring individuals to us who could be pension eligible or in need of aid and attendance. We anticipate a large influx in pension awards for this coming year and the following years as well as a lot more service particularly to spouses of veterans. We are in essence copying a program that was initiated in the State of Washington. In a period of about five years, they reduced their medicaid payments by about 15 million dollars and increased their Federal dollars in veterans benefits by about 15 million dollars. We are also working the reverse, and referring individuals to the S.R.S. people who do not qualify for veterans benefits. Rich felt the Division's performance for this last year was exemplary and all the employees should be commended. Dale asked if the drop in Kalispell was because of the turnover in personnel and Rich answered yes. He will be sending Wayne to Kalispell again within the next few weeks to offer additional training. Rich feels that the initial training afforded new employees in this Division is inadequate and the liability could be devastating. We should be sending as many of our employees as we can to out of State schools for the insurance program and also veteran benefits workshops. Unfortunately there is not the funding to do this kind of training. We will be sending Wayne to various offices for follow-up training as funds become available. Dale asked if the D.A.V. was still sending their van out. Wayne answered yes, but Bill Comp, National Service Officer for the D.A.V. told him that he did not get many claims in the northwestern part of Montana because the V.A.D. has it mostly covered. Wayne also wished to point out that Miles City's statistics were the highest increase percentage wise and Barbara has only been there a little over a year. She is mostly self trained and should be commended. Bernie asked if the Helena office was doing any "atta boy/girl" letters to the field. Rich answered no, but would be sending letters on behalf of the Board.

The next order of business concerned legislation. Rich affirmed that we will be working with the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Board on trying to develop legislation for an armed forces veteran licence plate. He has talked with some of our legislators and they are very much in favor of the idea. Part of the charge for the plate would go to the operation of the Montana State Veterans Cemetery.

Rich also wished to elaborate on the correspondence he had sent the Board concerning what he termed as unnecessary trouble with the Attorney General's office. This was created as a result of an opinion from the Attorney General that basically says if you are a 100% disabled veteran and wish to take advantage of the license plate exemption, you must accept D.V. plates and cannot

purchase personalized license plates for an additional fee. Rich feels this is contrary to the law concerning personalized plates which says anyone can purchase a personalized plate. Rich suggested to the Board they may want to seek legislation to amend this statute to include 100% disabled veterans as being eligible to purchase personalized license plates. This would allow the system to continue to operate as it has in the past before this attorney general's opinion came up. Bernie suggested that this be discussed with the D.A.V. to see what their pleasure would be and if they would like to initiate this proposal or if they would like the Board to pursue. Rich said he would consult with the D.A.V. commander and the adjutant for their opinion and report back to the Board at their next meeting.

Mr. Brown also said he anticipates the veterans organizations will come up with a Flag Desecration Bill very much the same as Indiana and Texas. We will be asking that the State of Montana pass laws similar to those States that the maximum penalty for assaulting anyone that burns the United States Flag is \$1.00.

Also, legislation is being proposed by the American Legion and the other veterans organizations that restricts selling alcohol to members only of the various organizations. Also, most of the veterans organizations were specifically excluded from participating in any bingo activities unless they purchased a \$500.00 bingo license. He did mention that some of the V.F.W. Clubs had an exclusion under 501-C3 or C4. He is not aware how they acquired this. Dale said that the V.F.W. in his area used the 501-3C letter which is an exemption to buying the license by being a non-profit organization. This year however, they were told they had to buy a license. They have consequently abolished playing bingo. Dale went on to say that through the Legacy Legislature this year they passed a Bill to get the \$500.00 bingo fee eliminated. A brief discussion followed with the general consenses of the Board being the limitation of members only in the clubs would not be profitable especially to the smaller clubs and the \$500.00 bingo license would curtail most clubs from playing bingo.

Dale turned the Boards attention back to the Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison. He asked what could be done to be able to spend some money to improve the cemetery. Rich said we were spending the donation money for maintenance but the revenue check off money could only be used for construction. He mentioned again that he is endeavoring to form a committee made up of the veterans organizations and their auxiliaries that would review any construction projects, make recommendations to the Board for approval and then proceed down the line with the Veterans

Administration. The veteran organizations and the Board need to be included in making decisions as to where the construction money is spent rather than one individual directing it all. Dale intimated that perhaps we are spread too thin and additional personnel is needed. Ruben commented that we should develop the cemetery as we use it rather than to do it all at once. More discussion followed which included digging ten graves at a time for economic reasons, the liability involved and eventually holding all services in the center circle.

The last item on legislation concerned the veterans preference law. The Legislature agreed to let the law run for two years to see if any problems developed. It is due to sunset this next year. We will, as well as all the veterans groups, ask the preference be extended indefinitely.

Dale added that the Legacy Legislature has voted to support the Veterans Affairs Division and he also suggested that we look at the proposed legislation on cigarette tax and if it would jeopardize the funding for the veterans nursing home. Rich explained that the legislation would add \$.25 per pack tax on cigarettes for advertizing that "smoking is hazardous to your health". If this passes it would have a double impact on the tax to support the nursing home and felt it would not be a good piece of legislation.

The meeting moved on to the next order of business which was the Wolf Point office. Rich talked with Jerry Collins, Service Officer in Wolf Point, concerning the lack of claims from the Wolf Point area. Wayne Hill, Senior Service Officer, explained that the V.A. statistics show a decline in the veteran population in that area. Also, 15% of the travel budget was used by the Wolf Point Service Officer to generate only 5% of the awards money. Most of his business is achieved on his road trips and not in the office. Wayne recommended that the Service officer position (FTE) in Wolf Point be transferred to Helena and the Service Officers from Great Falls and Miles City extend their travel to cover the Wolf Point area. Rich confirmed what Wayne said and added that there is a definite need for a Service Officer in Helena. Wayne in actuality is a claims officer and needs to be taking care of the needs of the field. Instead, Wayne, as well as Marie and myself, are doing service officer work by covering walk in business. Rich feels if we had a full time service officer in Helena we could generate another million dollars worth of business in a year. He said any rumors about abolishing service to the northeastern part of the State are not true and we would continue to extend service in all areas. We would like to have this operational by September and plan to keep

our office in the Roosevelt County Courthouse in the event the move does not prove to be advantageous. Neil Shepherd then made a motion to move the S.O. position from Wolf Point to Helena by September, Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried. Letters will be directed to the V.F.W., American Legion and the D.A.V. posts advising them of the same. Any comments should be directed to Rich Brown in Helena.

Bernie made mention that the Board would have to be reassigned areas of responsibility. Rich said this could be discussed and decided at the next meeting.

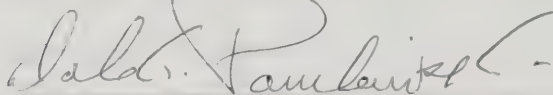
The last order of business was election of new officers for the coming year. Dale made a motion that past tradition be followed in selecting officers, Ruben seconded the motion and it was carried. The new officers are Bernie Opp, Chairwomen, Neil Shepherd, Vice Chairman and Bob Durkee secretary.

Before the meeting adjourned, Rich wished to advise the Board that a suggestion has been made that Fort Harrison receive a mobile clinic to service veterans on a outpatient basis in northwestern Montana. Major General Gary Blair of the Montana National Guard has given us his full support and will make the National Guard Armories available for use.

Bernie Opp, on behalf of the Board wished to thank Dale Pawlowski for serving as Chairman for the past year and commended him on an excellent job.

There being no further business, the regular meeting adjourned and the Board retired into a brief executive session.

The next meeting has been scheduled for October 12, 1990 in Helena at 10:00 A.M.



DALE PAWLOWSKI, Chairman



NEIL SHEPHERD, Secretary (acting)

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairperson Bernie Opp in the National Guard Armory in Helena Montana on October 12, 1990 at 9:30 A.M.

Members and guests in attendance were are follows:

Neil Shepherd, Vice Chairman	Rich Brown, Administrator
Bob Durkee, Secretary	Wayne Hill, Senior Service Officer
Dale Pawlowski, Member	Marie Hinman, Admin. Secretary
Ruben McKinney, Member	Tony Cumming, American Legion

A motion was made by Neil Shepherd to approve the minutes of the previous meeting, Bob Durkee seconded the motion and it was carried.

The first order of business concerned our office space in the National Guard Armory in Bozeman. As previously discussed the National Guard would like us to find other space for our office as the new Commander of the Army National Guard would like to use the space we now occupy for his office. We were making arrangements to move to the Bozeman Job Service. The advantages would be that we would be sharing space with another State Agency and due to budget cuts and restrictions the Bozeman Employment Office lost their Disabled Veteran Outreach Person and they need some additional services for veterans in the Bozeman Job Service. We negotiated an agreement with the Director of the Department of Labor whereby we would receive the office space at no cost now but would go to the 1991 Legislature and ask them to appropriate the necessary money for the office space which would be retroactive for the period 90-91 plus carry it forward as the cost continued. We recently received a call from Mr. Jim Hill, the accountant for the Department of Labor who informed us the Bozeman Job Service wants \$10,526.00 for a completion bond, (our office would be in the basement of the facility so they had to make daylight entries into the basement, a sprinkler fire system plus other construction). In addition to \$10,526.00, they want \$6,324.00 in annual rent (\$530.00 monthly). Mr. Hill indicated that they would like the money now. We forwarded a copy of the written agreement that was entered into with Mr. Mike Micone and Gary Curtis, who are with the Department of Labor, which stated that we would be charged nothing for this year and that we would pay them whatever the Legislature gave us if in fact we did make the move. We have heard nothing to date. We have, however, had indications that the Department of Labor now is having second thoughts about our moving into their building because they want a lot of money and want a good portion up front. We could probably rent somewhere else at a lesser expense but the location would not be as good and would not have as many walk in veterans as we would find at the Job Service. Since the Job Service location is ideal we will continue negotiations with the Department of Labor

but if there is any money required from the Department of Labor for us to make that move this year, we will be unable to do so. Rich told the Board that they should also be aware that the written agreement with the Department of Labor was taken to the Governor's Budget Office and approved. He also made mention of the fact that some of the folks in the Bozeman National Guard are anxious for us to move to the extent they have locked the connecting door between our office and the rest of the building. Access to their portion of the building for photocopying etc. is gained by going completely outside of the building. An attempt has been made through Doug Booker, Administrator of Centralized Service and General Blair to have this situation rectified. Bernie Opp reported that the door is now unlocked with the condition we put up "No Smoking" signs. Rich stated that this could be a problem as we deal with lots of P.T.S.D. folks who need a cigarette but we will do what we can to avoid any difficulties. Ruben McKinney said he felt the Job Service would be an excellent location because of the contacts. Neil Shepherd asked if we could be forced out of the Armory or was there a deadline to move. Rich answered no. General Blair will protect us until we can find other office space. Dale Pawlowski asked if we had encountered any problems with the Job Service in Glendive as Barb Palmer meets with her vets there? Rich answered that we have a good association with them, in fact in most of the Job Service Offices throughout the State the D.V.O.P. person will make referrals to our office.

The next order of business concerned Jerry Collins' resignation from the Division. Rich explained that following Jerry's transfer to Helena from Wolf Point that he has decided to retire. We need a replacement as soon as possible and have advertized the position Statewide. The announcement closes on the 17th of this month. We anticipate over 100 applications and after the screening, will probably interview on Friday, the 26th of October. With the Board's approval of the redistricting of their territories to be covered, the interview panel for this position will be Rich, Wayne and Board member Bob Durkee. He feels it essential to have a person on and trained before the Legislature meets as we are even busier during this time. Dale asked if there was any particular reason Jerry quit. Rich answered that Jerry is in partnership on a farm in Wolf Point plus he was trying to work a very stressful job here in Helena and perhaps the pressure became great. After considering his options, it was Jerry's decision to return to Wolf Point and devote all of his time to the farm.

The next item on the agenda was a report to the Board on the new secretary in Kalispell. Rich informed the Board that we have hired Sherry Schweigert. The interviews were done by the Kalispell Service Officer Lee Barta, Senior Service Officer,

Wayne Hill and Senior Administrative Secretary, Marie Hinman. Mrs. Schweigert comes to us from the Assessors office in Kalispell and has worked with veterans on property tax exemptions and license plate fee exemptions. She is a very highly qualified individual. At the time we hired Mrs. Schweigert, no negotiations were entered into concerning her salary and we were unaware that she was a State Department of Revenue employee working in the County Assessors Office at a grade eight, step six. In order to compensate her fairly, we have temporarily assigned her a salary of a grade nine, step three, during her training period and when she has completed her training, she will be assigned a grade 10, step three. This will cost the Division slightly more than if we had hired a non-State employee however there are rules and regulations under the State guidelines covering the transfer of an employee from one State Agency to another that we must follow. Mrs. Schweigert has agreed to accept the position under these terms. It is Mr. Brown's feeling however that we have hired a highly qualified individual and one that will be with us for a long time.

The next order of business is the Cemetery. Mr. Brown advised the Board that we have received a \$300.00 donation from the Scottish Rite in Helena, a \$500.00 donation from the 163rd of the 41st (Army National Guard), and a gentleman that served in that unit has given us another \$500.00 to be used for sod. As a result of that we were able to lay approximately 3,000 square feet of sod at the Cemetery over the graves. Starting next Spring we hope to have all graves covered. There is a waiting period on sodding new graves however, due to a certain amount of settling that must be allowed for. We have also been in touch with the Telephone Company Pioneers and they will be planting approximately \$100.00 worth of trees to fill the holes that have been dug. Ruben asked what has been done about an underground sprinkling system. Rich answered that our engineer, Bob McKenna, will be working with us over the wintertime to develop an internal sprinkler system. Our plan is to run a system on each side of the sod that is now in place and have the system in before more sod is laid. We have received a volunteer effort from 10 National Air Guardsmen to put the sprinkler system in. Ruben asked about the water supply and Rich answered that we have our own well that pumps about 80 gallons a minute and has been sufficient to this point. The overall plans for the cemetery call for three wells, so the other two will be drilled at a later date. Ruben also asked about planting a row of hedge between the cemetery and the hospital. Rich said that we had received a number of hedge plants as a donation, and had planted them in that area, however the plants did not survive. We will continue to work on this project to isolate as much of the area from view as possible. Rich also mentioned that the V.A. is re-paving the road to the hospital and have agreed to lay pavement up to the

entrance of the cemetery. They will also be doing some work along the side of the road adjacent to the cemetery which will improve the appearance of the site. The Cemetery Committee has also suggested that we work with the idea of a veteran license plate and the suggested price will be \$10.00. The Department of Motor Vehicles has agreed to only charge us \$.60 per set of license plates. Therefore for each set we sell we will net \$9.40 for the State Veterans Cemetery. Another idea that was suggested is to identify the branch of service the veteran was in. Example would be Marine Corps veterans, Coast Guard veteran, etc. We will pursue getting that piece of legislation introduced in the very near future. Bernie asked if we had anyone to introduce this legislation? Rich answered no, but we will probably ask Senator Bob Williams from Hobson to do this. Ruben asked if we could use the monies derived from this to make improvements at the cemetery? Rich answered yes and also help to fund the cemetery sexton position. We will be cutting the sexton's hours down so all he will be doing until next Spring will be attending funerals, filling in the cremated grave sites and some involvement in snow removal. Rich also added that the negative complaints we had been receiving concerning the cemetery are almost non-existent now as improvement is very noticeable. He also noted that we had assigned Jerry Collins to the sod project and Jerry did an extremely good job. Bernie asked about the Cemetery Committee that is made up of the service organizations and their auxiliaries. Rich responded that the committee has had three meetings now and all the organizations have been represented. Some discussion had taken place at the last meeting concerning the two cent cigarette tax for the nursing home. This fund is perpetual and the money set aside. There could become a sizeable surplus and there may be a possibility of acquiring some of the money for the cemetery. He also mentioned that the D.A.V. Auxiliary will be setting up their own fund through solicitation from the other organizations which will readily available cash for purchases for the cemetery. This can also be used for matching funds from the V.A. Bernie asked who tracks the donations? Rich answered they are recorded in our office besides the Centralized Services Division with the Department of Military Affairs. Ruben made mention of a letter he had received from a veteran in Harlem concerning his dissatisfaction with the Cemetery. He was glad to know that progress is being made and will be able to respond to the veteran with some positive answers. More discussion followed concerning the controversy over using tax dollars verses donations and it was agreed the veteran donations were the best. Bernie also asked if we could send the service organizations an update on the cemetery? Rich replied that he hoped this could be done through the Cemetery Committee. The responsibility of the Cemetery is now being shared by all the veterans organizations and it should be up to each respective organization to let its members know what is going on.

Moving on to the next order of business, the area's of responsibility for each Board member was then discussed. Rich passed out a map with suggested areas which were: Dale cover the entire Eastern part of Montana which is serviced by the Miles City office, Ruben cover the same area that the Great Falls Service Office services, Bernie cover the Bozeman and Billings area, Bob cover the Helena and Butte area and Neil cover the Kalispell and Missoula area. The intent of the areas of responsibility is, if we hire a Service Officer in that area, the Board Member is in fact responsible for being at the hire to be a part of the interview process. Also, if any complaints reach the Helena office and we fail to resolve the matter then it would be handed to the Board member in that particular area. Ruben suggested that Petroleum County be put in his area instead of Bernie's as he travels through there every seven weeks. Bernie concurred. Dale also suggested that Garfield County be taken out of Ruben's area and put in his. Ruben had no objection. Rich will send the Board a revised map with these changes. Also, all field offices will receive a copy of the maps so they are aware of the Board member in their area.

Rich then brought up the fact that the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs had discontinued all travel. Wayne Hill, Senior Service Officer explained that effective October 1, 1990 we were notified that all beneficiary travel had been discontinued for all veterans. Letters were sent to the Congressional Delegation concerning the same. Wayne had a call from the T.V. station who asked him for comments. He in turn invited them to Fort Harrison where they could not only interview Wayne but also the V.F.W. National Service Officer, the D.A.V. National Service Officer plus any veterans that might happen to be in the area. The T.V. reporter did go to the V.A. and talked to the individuals mentioned above. Through the efforts of the Montana Congressional Delegation primarily, effective this past week, the D.V.A. has now reinstated beneficiary travel back to the date it was discontinued. Wayne feels our Division responded well, on short notice, to get the word out to our veterans. The Board asked Rich to send a letter to the Montana Congressional Delegation, on behalf of the Board, thanking them for their quick and effective action. Wayne also intimated that he is disturbed that the D.V.A. was able to cut travel on such short notice and we need to keep on top of what they are doing. He also alluded to the fact that a few of our cases involving veteran entitlements have "slipped through the cracks" so to speak and feels that these particular cases should be called to the attention of the Director (or his designee) at the D.V.A. They should know we take a personal interest in each and every case we deal with. He also suggested that the Board member from a particular veterans area should become personally involved in the specific case and appear at the D.V.A. on their behalf.

Bernie said that our veterans should be made aware of this fact. Rich also mentioned the funding for the Glendive Nursing Home. We have received a FAX of the list of State Nursing Homes to be funded. The FAX indicated that only 50% of these projects would receive funding but he feels Montana has a good chance of being included. A short discussion ensued with the conclusion being that Rich assured the Board that Montana's Congressional Delegations will be working to insure Montana receives the necessary monies to build an Eastern Montana Nursing Home.

The Veterans Affairs Division will be having their annual training again this year and the decision has been made to hold it in Billings. Wayne explained that all employees will attend with the exception of one person who will have the office in Helena open. He said he will be contacting a minimal amount of individuals from the V.A. to participate and also utilize our own Service Officers who have the expertise to share with the other employees. He said he would also would like to include some type of stress management on the program. We will start the first session Wednesday afternoon, the 7th of November, have sessions all day Thursday the 8th and conclude at noon on Friday, the 9th. He invited any Board member that may be in the area to join us.

Wayne also wanted to apprise the Board that when he was a service officer in Kalispell he had heard about the "Board". He mentioned that Bernie had stopped in to visit with him in his office and he really appreciated it. He felt it offered him the opportunity for feed back. He urged any Board member that is in an area where we have an office located, to stop in and visit with your service officers.

Bernie mentioned that there is a State agency that does stress management. She said the contact person is John Vestre and he is a Major in the Army National Guard. He has done stress management for the Guard and from a financial point maybe we should check on this for our people. Rich said he is in agreement that our Service Officers deal with stress on a day to day basis and we definitely need guidance to help our people cope with these types of things.

The last item on the agenda was a date and place for the next meeting. Rich suggested that we hold it in Kalispell in December before the Legislature meets. Bernie proposed the 7th of December. This date was agreeable. Rich would also like to arrange a tour of the Veterans Nursing Home in Columbia Falls. Ruben questioned if we could hold our meeting at Columbia Falls. Rich felt this could be worked out. Bernie mentioned that there is also room at the National Guard Armory. The Board will be notified of the time and place when the specifics have been finalized.

Before the meeting adjourned, Rich referenced a State law that mandates we do performance appraisals on our employees annually, however these haven't been done for a very long time. We are working with Jim Nys, our personnel consultant, to develop a program for conduct and performance. When this is in place we will be doing a performance appraisal on all our employees. Rich said the Board would do his, he and Wayne will do the Service Officers and the Service Officer will do their secretaries. The employee will also have the opportunity to respond in writing and these documents will all be kept in their personnel file. He is hopeful to have them all done before the next meeting.

Rich also commented that any opposition to the Site Selection Committee has died down and no suits have been filed to date. The American Legion and V.F.W. will be meeting in Glendive and they are developing a special fund set aside to buy a handicapped accessible bus to transport veterans between Glendive and Miles City. The Vietnam Memorial Committee in Missoula is taking the original four foot statue and donating it to the Eastern Montana Nursing Home, plus, there are many other veterans organizations who have made numerous offers of donations for the home. On the State level the Department of Administration, Architecture and Engineers, has hired C.T.A. Architecture and Engineering out of Billings to get the plans ready so we can submit them no later than July 1, 1991 to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Senator Conrad Burns is supporting legislation that would increase the V.A.'s annual amount for construction of State nursing homes from 40 to 60 million dollars. Both of our Senators have already been in contact with the Department of Veterans Affairs officials and it looks like October 1st, we will have the 2.6 million dollar match from the Federal Government to get the program started.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.


Bernadette Opp, Chairperson


Bob Durkee, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order on December 7, 1990 in Kalispell, Montana by Chairperson Bernadette Opp with the following members and guests present:

Neil Shepherd, Vice Chairman	Rich Brown, Administrator
Bob Durkee, Secretary	Wayne Hill, Senior S.O.
Dale Pawlowski, Member	Marie Hinman, Admin Sec.
Ruben McKinney, Member	Pat Estenson, Dir. Vets Home

A representation of veterans from various area veterans organizations.

Before the regular order of business began, Chairperson Opp thanked the many guests who attended the Board meeting.

The first order of business was the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting. Neil Shepherd made a motion to dispense with the reading as all Board members had been mailed a copy and to approve them as written, Bob Durkee seconded the motion and it was approved.

Dale made mention that the minutes are made available to the Montana Veterans of Foreign Wars for publication to be reviewed by the membership.

The next order of business was the personnel update. Rich Brown explained that the positions within the Division that are classified as Administrative Secretaries do not actually fall in line with the duties of an Administrative Secretary which are typing and shorthand skills. We have therefore changed their title to Program Assistants. Their function is to take the place of the Service Officer in his/her absence or to assist the Service Officer in the performance of all duties including filing for benefits and insuring that the veterans or their dependents receive the maximum benefits to which they are entitled. We have been working with the Department of Military Affairs in changing that job description to Program Assistant II which is the same grade as an Administrative Secretary. We would also like, with the Board's concurrence, to move the Word Processor position currently held by Sharon Krebs, to a Program Assistant I and the Administrative Secretary position held by Marie Hinman, who is also the secretary to the Board and the Senior Administrative Secretary, to a Program Assistant III. The job duties and job descriptions have been given to each of you for your review. By moving the two positions in Helena it will mean the Division will be spending some extra money in personnel service however the money is available for the remainder of this year. We cannot make the changes until May, 1991, as the Governor has directed that there be no reclassification of employees until March of 1991. In March we will be filing these changes and anticipate they will be effective in May. We will be moving Sharon Krebs

from a Grade 7 to a Grade 9, Program Assistant I, the Program Assistant II will remain at a Grade 10, and Marie Hinman from a grade 10 to a grade 11, Program Assistant III. We have also been going through all the job descriptions in the field because we will be doing performance appraisals in the near future. The appraisals are based on what we have worked out in job descriptions and job duties. Bernie asked if the projected date for completion would be July, and Rich replied he felt this was accurate. He will also be working with the individuals in the Helena office on job duties etc., for performance appraisals and the Board will work with him to do his and Wayne's performance appraisals. Dale asked if a plan has been developed to do the appraisals, Rich answered that we will be using the standard State of Montana form. He did mention that he felt for the most part all of our employees are doing an outstanding job and by doing the performance appraisals that affords the employees a opportunity for feed back and also provides job security to them in terms of having good performance appraisals. Where there are some minor problems these will be noted and we will ask that those things be corrected. Bernie recommended, that while we were discussing personnel matters, that a letter be sent to the acting service officer in Bozeman for the outstanding job she did in the absence of the Service Officer. Rich concurred that this should be done on behalf of the Board and agreed that she has done a find job for the Division.

The next item on the agenda concerned the Glendive Nursing Home. Rich gave a brief background of the Nursing Home which included the Legislature approving the Home, a site selection committee being appointed by Governor Stan Stephens, Glendive being selected as the site, legislation introduced and approved to tax cigarettes two cents a package which will raise about 1.9 million dollars in State monies to be matched by 3.7 million dollars in Federal money for the development of a 100 bed State Veterans Nursing Home in Glendive. The State's money has been going into a fund for the operation of the Home for almost a two year period of time. We are running into problems in obtaining the money from the Federal Government. (65% share) Although the Department of Institutions did an outstanding job of being one of the first applicants, because of the standards applied by the Veterans Administration, Montana's ranking came in as 15th on a list. Due to the way the Federal Government has been funded this year, it is doubtful that the monies will be available to fund Montana's veteran nursing home. There has been no announcements as such by the Department of Veterans Affairs and our Congressional Delegation has been in constant contact with them asking them to respond to us but as yet we have not received anything official. He did add that in the Department of Institutions budget submitted this year to the State Legislature, they have documented oral conversations with D.V.A. officials

that indicate the chances of receiving this money are in serious doubt so they have not asked the State legislature for any operations money for the next two years for the Glendive Nursing Home. He went on to say that because of the changes in the regulations imposed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, which became effective November 1, 1990, whereby they will no longer pay eligible veterans pension with aid and attendance if they are in a medicaid eligible nursing home, it is more important than ever to provide our Montana veterans with a second nursing home. He also brought up a point of interest concerning the Glendive Nursing Home which was the Ranger Review publishing an opinion concerning what the State has asked of the folks in Glendive for building the nursing home. Originally when the committee went through the program, they outlined and assigned points to the various locations. Glendive at the time had points taken away for donating too much land. (Extra care and maintenance) There has since been a reversal by the State of Montana and they are now asking the City of Glendive to come up with addition money for more land, additional money for pavement and additional money for water and sewer. This does place a tremendous burden on the city of Glendive. He indicated that his personal opinion was in agreement with the article, that Glendive has been pushed to the limit with what they can provide. Had the same land requirements been placed on any of the other applicants, the land they offered would not have been nearly enough. In closing the discussion on the nursing home, he said it was his belief that if the funding does not come through this year that Montana would be very near the top of the priority list for next year, and that there are Montana legislatures that are ready to amend the legislation to allow us another year of compliance. Neil Shepherd asked if the project was postponed for two years would the money still be available? Rich answered yes, the money was appropriated for the nursing home and it would take legislation to reverse that. The cigarette tax money in terms of going for the construction of the nursing home expires on June 30, 1991 but that is not a problem because the money should be sufficient. The only amendment required to the legislation would be to change the date to June 30, 1992 to come up with the Federal matching funds. A suggestion was made that a watch be put on the money so it is not reestablished for some other project. Al Dougherty asked about keeping the cigarette tax on forever, and Rich explained that it is a perpetual tax but there will be proposals that this money generated from the tax be used for the operation of the Columbia Falls and Glendive Nursing Homes. Al advocated that the money should be used exclusively for veteran projects whatever they may be. Rich agreed that this was a very good point and steps will be taken to influence this money be used only for veteran purposes. He also mentioned that there are some legislators from the Butte, Anaconda area that would like to see part of the cigarette tax money stay to be used for building

another veterans nursing home in Galen or in that area. There are also individuals who want to see part of that money used for further development of the State Veterans Cemetery and there are individuals who want to use the money to operate the Columbia Falls and Glendive nursing homes. The veterans have been contacting the legislators to keep the 2 cent cigarette tax basically locked in for veterans purposes. The question was asked on how much money the tax will generate and the answer was about 1.2 million annually if the current level of taxes and prices remain unchanged.

The meeting then turned to the veteran legislation which will be proposed for the upcoming session. Those things included: funding for the Montana Veterans Affairs Division; the veterans preference (remove "sunset clause"); funding for the State Veterans Cemetery, (revenue check-off, licence plates, excess cigarette tax money, general fund option); two cent cigarette tax (operation State Veterans Nursing Home, build annex to Columbia Falls at Galen); personalized license plates for 100% disabled veterans; funding for women veterans memorial in Washington D.C.; and the American Legion - flag protection resolution. Rich gave a brief description of each item and what the end result would be. Al Dougherty asked if there was anything the veterans in the Kalispell area could do to assist with these things. Rich conveyed his compliments to the veterans in the Kalispell area as they have always worked hard to protect and secure any and all concerns of veterans. A resolution was drawn up by the V.F.W. to use some of the gaming tax money from each of the Veterans Organization's Post Clubs to fund veteran projects. Rich said this was a good idea but probably one of the most difficult things to do in terms of the legislature.

Rich then turned the meeting over to Wayne to discuss the statistics of the Division. A copy of the broken down figures was given to each member which shows how the monies are tracked for each office. Wayne explained each category and what they mean. He pointed out for the months of July through October the money our Division was successful in obtaining for veterans and their dependents was \$6,659,265.00. In comparing these figures to last year, we are about where we should be. He also talked about the S.R.S. program whereby we are trying to get the veterans who are on State medicaid receiving Federal V.A. pensions instead. We have been tracking those referrals and the total amount of money we have rolled over is \$247,100.00. There are changes that may cancel this program due to the changes in the V.A. regulations. He feels our Division is doing a great job and have well qualified people in all our offices. Dale asked if there had been any complaints due to closing the Wolf Point office. Wayne answered no, that our Miles City and Great Falls offices are doing an outstanding job in covering that portion of

the State. Rich added that we have seen a slight increase coming out of that area. Also, with the additional help in the Helena office (transfer of the Wolf Point service officer position) we will probably see an increase in the Helena statistics.

Before the meeting adjourned, a brief overview of the training session that our employees attended, was addressed. Both Wayne and Rich felt it went extremely well and possibly one of the best to date. The V.A. individuals gave our people extremely useful information. Don Polly from Medical Administration Services provided handouts which he explained in detail. In addition, Evan Lewis, a clinical psychologist, addressed the issues of stress and the effective ways of dealing with it. Our employees deal with individuals with problems every day and Wayne perceived the consequences of operating under these conditions could become overwhelming. He felt the presentation given by Evan will help our people to cope with this type of thing in the future. Rich added that the Department of Military Affairs contracts with an agency called Personnel Plus so we were able to have Jim Nys from that agency talk to us about what the employees rights are, and what some supervisory skills might be for our Service Officers. Karen Peek, a psychologist, who also works for Personnel Plus gave everyone a test which disclosed if they were competitive, assertive, etc. which worked out very well. Our people were also able to look at the standards of performance in the final form. Everyone was in concurrence which will help us with our performance appraisals. Rich complimented the Division for doing an outstanding job and said everyone is operating at more than 100%.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned into an executive session.

The next meeting has been scheduled for March 29, 1991 at 10:00 A.M. in Helena.

Bernie Opp

Bernie Opp, Chairperson

for Bob Durkee

Bob Durkee, Secretary



State of Montana
Office of the Governor
Helena, Montana 59620
406-444-3111

STAN STEPHENS
GOVERNOR

June 11, 1991

The Honorable Mike Cooney
Secretary of State
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Secretary Cooney:

Please be informed that effective immediately I have appointed the following person to the Board of Veterans' Affairs in accordance with Section 2-15-1205, MCA, under the Department of Military Affairs.

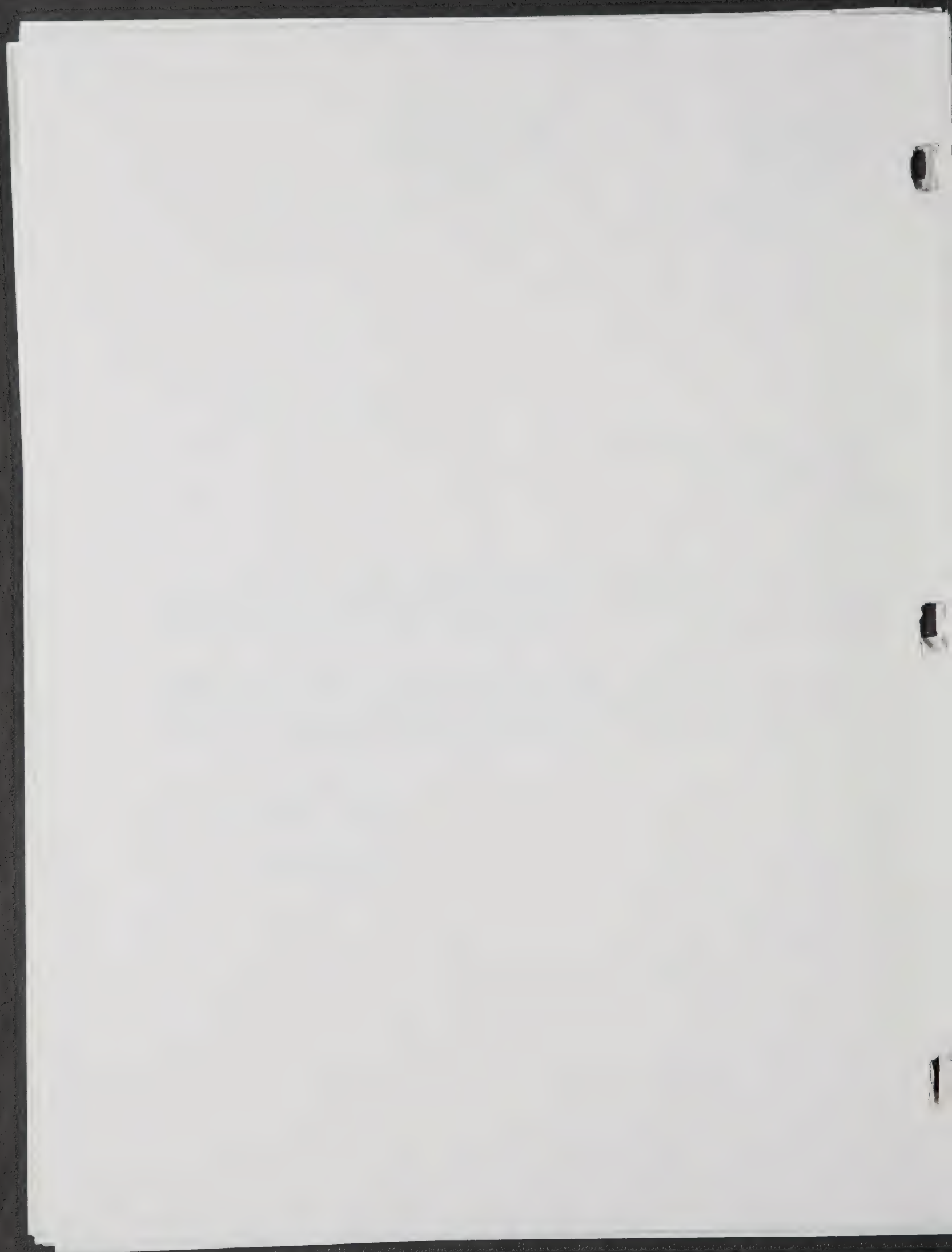
Mr. Thaddeus Mayer, 3798 Creekwood Road, Missoula, MT, 59802 is to serve a term ending May 18, 1996, and fulfills the requirement for being honorably discharged from military service. Mr. Mayer succeeds Mr. Robert A. Durkee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stan Stephens".

STAN STEPHENS
Governor

cc: Rich Brown



A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairwoman Bernie Opp on March 15, 1991 with the following members and guests present:

Dale Pawlowski, Member	Marie Hinman, Adm. Secretary
Ruben McKinney, Member	Cheryl Heald, S.O.
Rich Brown, Administrator	Barbara Palmer, S.O.
Ruddy Reilly, S.S.O.	Dolores Kloeckner, Prog.Asst.
Lee Barta, S.O.	

Neil Shepherd, Member and Bob Durkee, members were not in attendance due to illness.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written.

Rich Brown, Administrator gave the Board a report of the Bills that were before the Legislature. Of those Bills pertaining to veteran issues, two have been signed by the Governor to date. They are the removal of the sunset clause from the Veterans Preference Law and the Bill clarifying the duties of the Burial Supervisors with the State and also clarifies that those individuals that served in the Coast Guard are veterans and entitled to the County burial benefit. Other Bills that are being considered are: gaming bills for non-profit clubs; create nursing home beds in Galen (annex to Columbia Falls); appropriation of \$25,000 for a women memorial at Arlington Cemetery (committee asking each State for like funding); authorize special license plates for survivors of Pearl Harbor; increase travel expenses for State employees; asking for \$50,000 of the lottery money for operations and maintenance at the veterans cemetery; asking for the \$.02 cigarette tax money be extended until June 30, 1993; balance all Boards (bill has been gutted); license plate bill which corrects the Attorney General's opinion thus allowing a 100% veteran to utilize his exemption, pay an addition fee, and receive a personalized license plates, or other plates, rather than being limited to one D.V. plate; incorporating all special veteran license plate bills for veterans which designates them as veterans or belonging to a special veterans group. Revenue generated from the additional fee will be used for the veterans cemetery; grant military leave, with supplemental pay status for State employees called to active military duty as a result of operation Desert Storm; support troops in Desert Storm; a resolution addressing the issue of a Native American who is a veteran receiving treatment at the Indian Health Service; a resolution addressing anti-flag desecration; a resolution granting a bonus to veterans that served in the Gulf War (This Bill, if passed as written, will be assigned to our Division for dispersement of payments. This will mean additional employees and additional office space). Rich

also reported that Bill that contains our budget (at current level) has cleared the House Appropriations Committee. He also noted that most of the Departments were being asked to absorb a 4 or 5% vacancy savings. The Department of Military Affairs was exempted from the vacancy savings. Because we had moved the Service officer position from Wolf Point to Helena, an attempt was made to increase the funding in our budget for an addition employee and re-establish service in the Wolf Point area. An amendment to our budget, to include another F.T.E., was handed the Chairman of the committee during the hearing. He expressed an interest but didn't feel the committee could consider the measure without further study. He therefore suggested that it be referred to the full Appropriations Committee. This did not happen, so now it appears it will be two years before we can attempt this again. Chairman Opp asked about an amendment to our budget that would provide training for our employees. Rich said that this was attempted however the Legislature didn't feel this was a major concern. Rich said he would be sending out the status of the Bills as they progress. He felt the Legislature was treating veterans very well.

Dale complemented Miles City and Great Falls for doing a good job covering the Counties left vacant by the Wolf Point service officer move. Rich added that Connie Wilson, who is a V.A. employee has helped a great deal by making referrals to our Service Officers.

Moving on, Rich gave the Board an update on the Bozeman office. The transfer from the Bozeman National Guard to the Job Service is now complete and we are fully operational. We are in the basement, and it is handicap accessible. The equipment difficulties have been rectified and everything is in place. The funding for rent is still controversial, however because of the original agreement with the Department of Labor (that we be given space with no cost) the budget office is refusing to hear any arguments. Because of the cost for utilities, cleaning etc., if the Division has any funds left at the end of the annual budget year, we will compensate the Department of Labor and suggest that this be built into our budget.

On the employee changes, Rich reported that the revision of the offices has proven to be very successful. Ruddy is doing an excellent job as the new Senior Service Office with no complaints from anyone to me. Glen Webster newly hired Service Officer in Great Falls, came to us from the Military Order of the Purple Heart. He demonstrates ample background in some areas and is lacking experience in other areas. Rich said he does feel he will develop into a good service officer. Also, the Program Assistant in Great Falls is well trained and can be a valuable tool to Mr. Webster.

The figures on the FY 91 budget were then passed out. Rich explained that we are three-quarters of the way through the year and are having problems in some areas and satisfactory in others. One of the areas of difficulty is in communications and we will be sending a memo to the field to be very conservative through the end of the fiscal year. The travel money will be very close and when the budget was prepared, we were only given enough money for rent in Great Falls for 10 months rather than twelve. This will have to be taken from other areas to make up the difference. We are also liable for expenditures for an audit which is being done at this time. We have not had any complaints other than to segregate monies collected for the Cemetery into two centers. One for the plot allowance and the other for donations. The bottom line is we will have totally exhausted our budget by the end of the year. There may be a small amount of money left in personnel services but this can not be transferred into operations. We will also be asking for employee upgrades, however there is a restraining order on submitting any reclassifications at this time. The Service Officer upgrades will need a supplemental appropriation to fund.

Position descriptions and job standards have been sent to all the employees for them to review, and we are now waiting for the six months time lapse so we may begin the evaluations. We are monitoring work as it comes through the Helena office to make a determination of how the work load is split and the quality of the work being done. We have encountered a couple of problems that are not in the best interest of the Division and are presently investigating these problems to see where the fault lies, and why.

Rich went on to say that the necessity for training within the Division is vital. With the help of Sherry Schweigert, Program Assistant in Kalispell, who worked with Rich, Ruddy and Marie, we have developed a training manual which has been distributed to all the field offices. Also, with the expertise of Marie Hinman, Senior Program Assistant, we have also developed an administrative manual so that the field employees will not only have the duties and responsibilities of their positions, but also a reference guide listing the rules and regulations governing the employees of the Division, as established by the State of Montana.

The attention of the Board then turned to Mr. Ruddy Reilly who explained the functions of the Court of Veterans Appeals. Basically, the purpose of the Court of Veterans Appeals (COVA) is to give the veteran/dependent a higher court to appeal their case if it is denied by the Board of Veterans Appeals. Since this court was established it has forced the V.A. and the Board of Veterans Appeals to reconsider many cases that were denied because the rules, established by the V.A. themselves, were never

followed. The regulation states that when there is a benefit of doubt, a decision in favor of the veteran must be granted. Ruddy explained that with COVA in place, the V.A. cannot gloss over these cases any longer. In the past, the Board could summarily just deny a case by saying no. Now they have to say no, because and be very specific. He also mentioned that our people will have to be absolutely accurate in the preparation of claims. Ruddy was adamant about our employee having training and again mentioned that he has training tapes that are available to our field offices. He also noted that we need new Title 38 U.S. Codes to bring our people up to date on the new rules and regulations. Rich mentioned that he has spoken to John Hanson from the American Legion in Washington, who will be in Missoula in September for a twelve state district meeting. He requested their training staff might come a day early to put on a training session for our people. We should have an answer in the near future if this is a possibility. The bottom line is we must have adequate training to do our jobs and without that training we are leaving ourselves open to a liability.

Dale asked for an interpretation of what care is being provided to veterans in a V.A. Hospital. Rich explained that they are only treating veterans with service connected injuries or those that are indigent. There are many misleading stories concerning the same but the facts are that the V.A. is cutting back to almost no treatment for the veterans.

Dale asked what the long range plan would be for our Division. Rich suggested that the Chairman of the Board, and another member or members get together, look at the dollars available and decide what the priorities are. If the Committee feels training is a top priority, then dollars would have to be taken from travel or some other operating expense. A discussion was held on the productivity of the current travel schedules and getting the word out to the veterans. Bernie suggested that the Service Officers could be contacted for their recommendations on how to increase our services. Rich also suggested that we contact veterans groups and ask them to make referral to our Division.

Bernie asked about the job evaluations and Rich answered that July is still the date for doing these evaluations. He also mentioned that the Board would be doing his evaluation and a job description for his position will be sent to each member for their review. Ruddy's position description will also be updated, with a copy going to the Board.

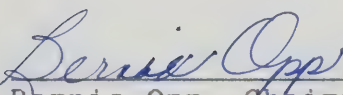
Bernie Opp then asked about the newly formed cemetery committee and who has responsibility for the committee. Rich answered that the cemetery committee is made up of a delegation from the various service organizations and they are responsible. They are collecting donated monies and can spend the money as the need

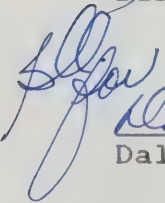
arises without going through the same bidding process as the State requires for each item needed. Bernie expressed that she felt the committee was indeed an attribute however, whatever transpires at the Cemetery is a direct reflection on the Board and Division. She therefore felt it would be in the best interest of the Board if they were afforded some sort of feedback from this committee, perhaps in the nature of a copy of the minutes from each meeting. Rich said he would present this at their next meeting. Member McKinney asked how the situation with the sprinkler system was coming. Rich replied that the Air National Guard, Montana Power and Mountain Bell had offered their assistance at no cost. Therefore when we purchase the necessary supplies for the system, the installation will be donated services.

Chairwomen Opp then inquired about the status of the United Veterans Committee. Rich said he has not been versed on their financial standings for some time, and it was his understanding that they have not had a meeting for some time. He was conscious of the fact George Poston, lobbyist for the organization has been busy at the Legislature. He said he would research the issue and report to the Board at their next meeting.

There being no further business, Chairman Opp thanked the guests that were in attendance at the meeting and asked the Board for any preferences they may have for the next meeting. It was agreed that the meeting will be held in Bozeman on July 19th at 10:00. Bernie will check into the availability of a meeting place and notify the Helena office so notices may be sent out.

A motion was made, seconded and carried the meeting be adjourned.


Bernie Opp, Chairwomen


Dale Pawlowski
Dale Pawlowski, Acting Secretary

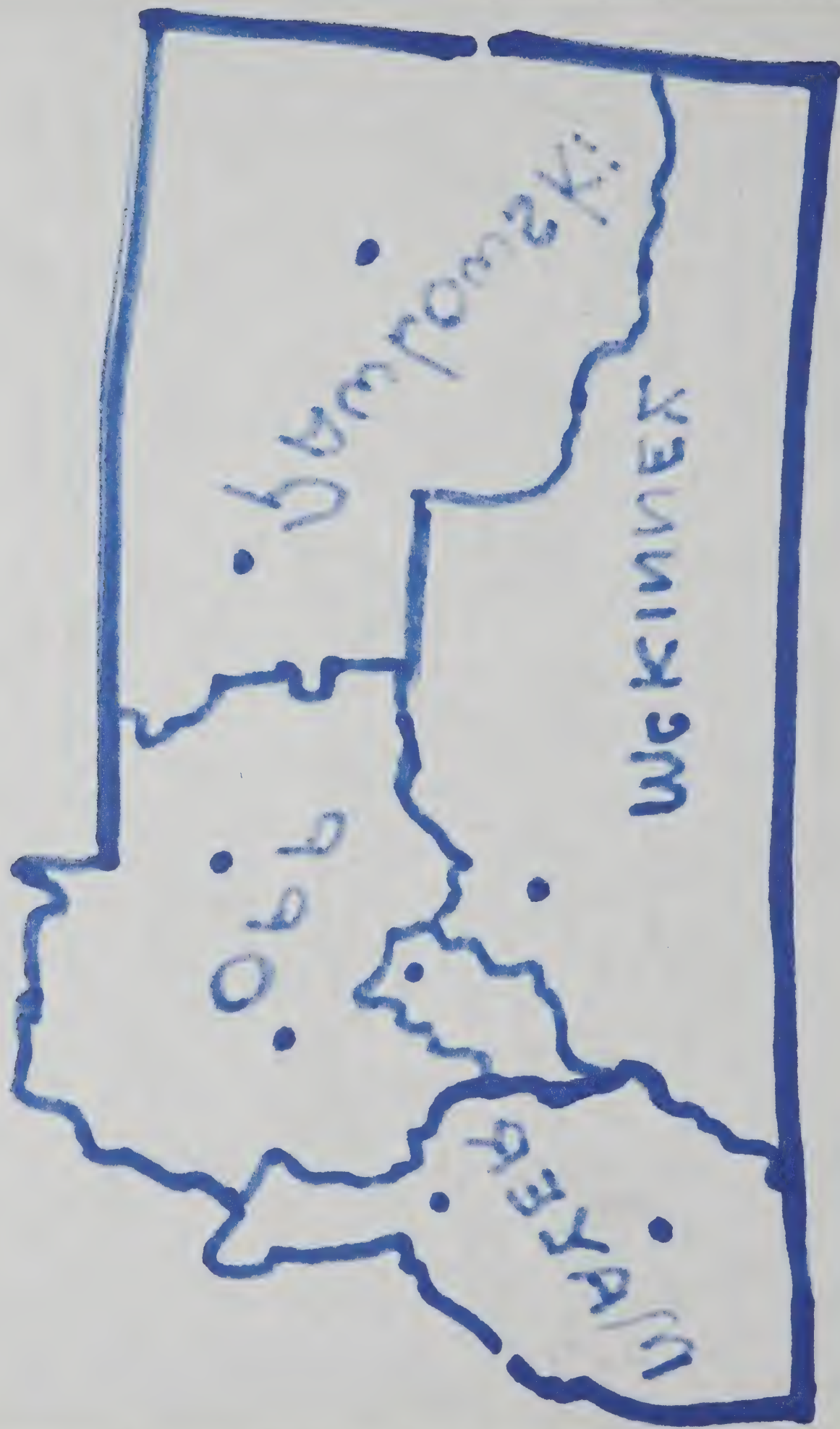
MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS - AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

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A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairperson Bernie Opp on Friday July 9, 1991 at the National Guard Armory in Helena. Chairperson Opp introduced Mr. Thaddeus "Tot" Mayer, new Board member, who replaced Mr. Bob Durkee. Mr. Mayer is a retired Lt. Col. U.S. Army and resides in Missoula, Montana.

Also present were:

Neil Shepherd, Vice Chairman	Marie Hinman, Program Assistant
Ruben McKinney, Member	Wayne Carlson, Cemetery Sexton
Rich Brown, Administrator	Helmer Stenbeck, Guest
Lee Barta, Service Officer	
Bobbie Kokoruda, Service Officer	

It was noted that Board member Dale Pawlowski was unable to attend due to medical problems.

Also introduced were our two new hires, Wayne Carlson, Cemetery Sexton and Bobbie Kokoruda, Service Officer; and guest Helmer Stenbeck.

Neil Shepherd made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written, Ruben McKinney seconded the motion and it was carried.

Under old business, Bernie asked about compensating the Department of Labor for the office space in Bozeman. Rich replied that there are no funds available to do this. Our budget has been totally expended. She also inquired about the upgrades for our employees. Rich explained that the individual who had been working on them had passed away which is going to set us back somewhat. We have however received word that Marie Hinman has been upgraded from her current Grade 10, Administrative Secretary position to a Grade 11, Senior Program Assistant. An attempt to move Sharon Krebs, the other secretary in the Helena office, from a Grade 7 to a Grade 9 was tentatively disapproved and will have to be reworked. The Service Officer's reclassification had not been completed in terms of being ready for submission consequently part of the process will have to be done over again. Bernie also asked about the employee evaluations to which Rich answered that they will be starting within the next month. We have encountered a couple of problems which have not been in the best interest of the Division and these will be discussed in an executive session. The Service Officer's workload was also discussed. Rich reported that he felt they were all working up to capacity, which is reflected on the statistics that will be discussed later in the meeting.

Moving on to new business, Rich passed out the budget reports for the previous year and explained that all money showing would be used as we still had some bills that were outstanding. The excess in the personnel services is due to a turn over of personnel, however that money cannot be used for operating expenses. These reports are also broken down per office which gives us a breakdown on actual cost per office with the exception of supplies which are all charged to the Helena office. We are working on a method to track these, by office, and anticipate having this operational soon. We would also like to set up a budget for each office to get the Service Officers familiar with the budgeting process.

Rich also mentioned that we are still operating on not enough money. We do not have the budget for the next fiscal year but by the next meeting we will have it broken down. This will include an additional \$22,500.00 for the operation of the State Veterans Cemetery. Approximately \$16,500.00 of that money goes for the payment of the salary of the Cemetery Sexton, and the additional \$6,000.00 goes for operations. The State travel reimbursement goes up effective October 1, 1991. The new rates are \$30.00 for a motel and \$15.50 a day for meals. (\$3.50 for breakfast, \$4.00 for lunch and \$8.00 for dinner). The pay raises which were granted by the Legislature will be reflected on the August 7, check. We did not receive any money for additional personnel so we will continue to use green thumb workers and work study individuals whenever possible. Due to the limited office space in some field offices this is not a consideration even though the need is definitely there.

The Division statistics were then discussed. Rich felt they looked exceptionally good. The field offices have been sent a letter of commendation for their outstanding performance. There was an overall increase for the Division of 15% over last year, which is partially a result of moving the Wolf Point position to Helena and extending Great Falls and Miles City to cover that area. All three of these offices have increased their business, with the Helena office realizing the biggest gain which was 134% over last year. It should also be noted that the Kalispell office totals had decreased but Rich felt that this could be due to a discrepancy in the reporting procedure as their workload indicates they are one of the busiest offices. Also, for the first time in the history of the Division, every single office is over a million dollars in terms of awards. These reports are broken down by category (compensation, pension, home loans, education, etc) and also by office. The section classified as S.R.S. referrals means that when an individual is entering a nursing home and has applied for medicaid support, these individuals who are veterans or spouses of veterans are referred

to our offices so that we may assist them in applying for V.A. pensions. In one years time we were successful in having approximately 1.2 million Federal V.A. dollars awarded to Montana veterans thus saving the State that amount of dollars in medicaid money. Rich also mentioned that in the six years that he has been the Administrator, the Division has increased its statistics by over 400%. A general letter has been sent to each office, but with the Board concurrence, he would like to sent individual letters of recognition for a job well done. The Board agreed that this should be done.

The results of the last legislative session were discussed. Rich informed the Board that we now have \$22,500.00 in general fund money for the cemetery sexton position for each of the next two years. The \$25,000.00 appropriated for the Women Veterans Memorial showed fiscal year beginning July 1, 1992. What this means is the money will not be available for another year. We have notified the individuals in Washington that there will be a years delay in sending them the \$25,000.00. Effective January 1, 1992, the veteran license plates will be available with part of the revenue generated going to the veterans cemetery the first year, and all the revenue thereafter. Ruben asked if there was a limit on how many veteran plates an individual could purchase and the answer was no, you may buy as many as you wish. It was suggested that our field offices could be helpful in letting individuals know that the plates are available. On the negative side, the cigarette tax money, that was going into an account for the construction of the veterans nursing home in Eastern Montana, was lost to the long range building fund effective July 1, 1991. Other than the loss of the cigarette tax money we have an excellent year at the legislature. Thanks should be given to the folks from the American Legion, V.F.W. and the D.A.V. for their joint efforts to get veteran legislation passed. Chairman Opp requested Administrator Brown to send thank you letters to the lobbyist of each of these organizations.

The next topic for discussion was employee performance appraisals. Rich passed out the employees guide to performance appraisals and the standards were discussed. In reference to the standard concerning complaints, Rich specified that if an individual has a complaint against one of our employees, the complaint must be in writing. Oral complaints have no validity. If an oral complaint is received, a standard form letter is sent to the offended individual so they may put their complaint in writing. If this form is not completed, signed and returned, then the complaint is considered irrelevant. Written complaints will be followed up on with the individual involved. Another standard that is of critical nature is the confidentiality of record. There are strict policies concerning this and they must

be adhered to. The standards for the Administrator and the Senior Service Officer were addressed and their duties were analyzed. It was agreed that the performance evaluations will be done by the entire Board at their December meeting. Rich and Ruddy will have the Field evaluations done before September training session.

Rich wished to also advise the Board that beginning in August he will be considered a salaried employee. He is the only one within the Division and one of only four within the Department that fall in this category. (Administrators or above). As salaried employees, they will only report 8 hours increments of leave on their time cards. This basically means that you do not report sick or annual leave if it is less than 8 hours in a given day and by the same principle, you do not report any time worked over eight hours in a given day, unless it falls outside your regular work week. (Weekends or holidays). It was his opinion however that this plan will not work because of the criticism from the private sector. He said he personally felt more comfortable with the old system and counting leave time, hour by hour.

The elections of new officers on the Board for the coming year were then held. Ruben McKinney made a motion that the elections keep with past tradition of succession, which would designate Neil Shepherd as Chairman, Ruben McKinney as Vice Chairman and Dale Pawlowski as secretary. Tot Mayer seconded the motion and it was carried. The areas of responsibility for the Board members were also discussed and will be revised due to the appointment of a new Board member.

The next item on the agenda was an update on the Veterans Cemetery. Rich complemented Wayne Carlson, the new cemetery sexton for the outstanding job he is doing on bring the cemetery up to standard. He was hired as a three quarter time person but we are hoping that we can work something out with the National Guard during the winter months so he can work full time all year. We have also received word that our request for a Federal grant has been approved for \$14,000.00 which is a match of \$7,000.00 cash and \$7,000.00 in kind services. The Cemetery Committee is also paying \$6,000.00 for a sprinkler system which will be installed soon. We will also be building an 8 foot wall and a cement pad in the center circle plus added more sod over the gravesites. Bernie Opp stated that the minutes from the cemetery committee meetings need to be sent to all Board members as they are being asked many questions from the public and the minutes will serve as a tool to keep abreast of the progress.

Under other business, September 20, 1991 has been designated Women's Veterans Day and suggested that Bernie Opp may want to attend as a representative of the Board. General Wilma Vaught will be speaking who is one of the senior ranking retired female

veterans in the military. She also heads the Women in Military Service Memorial in Washington D.C.

Also, sometime around October 1, 1991, there will be a celebration in Glendive, Montana. They should be receiving the Federal match for the construction of a 100 bed nursing home in Glendive. This will be the second veterans nursing in the State of Montana.

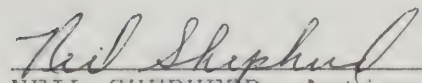
Our annual training session has been scheduled for September 25, 26, and 27th. We have set these dates because September 27th, will be the start of a 12 State Regional American Legion National Leadership Workshop. There are a number of National Officials that will be attending the workshop that have agreed to put on a program for us including the new COVA program and an update on Agent Orange. Rich suggested that the Board may want to schedule their next meeting to coincide with the training session so they might meet with the entire staff. A date was discussed and the end result was the next meeting will be Thursday, September 26th at 1:00 P.M.

Bernie Opp wished to pass on that she had talked with Dale Pawlowski who is recovering from major heart surgery. He indicated that all is going well and he plans on being with us at the next Board meeting.

Ruben asked about getting State I.D. cards for the Board members, as they are entitled to State rates when they are on Board business. This will be taken care of immediately following the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned into an executive session.


BERNADETTE OPP, Chairperson


NEIL SHEPHERD, Acting Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held on September 26, 1991 in Missoula, Montana to coincide with the Division staff training session. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Neil Shepherd with the following individuals present:

Bernie Opp, Member	Rich Brown, Administrator
Tot Mayer, Member	Marie Hinman, Senior Prog. Assist.
All Division personnel	Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

Chairman Shepherd thanked everyone for being there and also reported he had been advised that Board member Dale Pawlowski was ill in the hospital in Salt Lake City, and Board Member Ruben McKinney was unable to attend as he is serving on jury duty.

The minutes of the July, 1991 meeting were approved as written.

The first order of business concerned the Department of Veterans Affairs/National Health Care. Rich Brown, Administrator, explained that recently there has been a good deal of very viable discussions concerning the Department of Veterans Affairs being a new leader in developing a National Health Care Program. Presently there are some 37 million people in the United States that don't have health care insurance and 141 thousand of those people are in Montana. The V.A. is now treating CHAMPVA patients (dependents of 100% service connected veterans or surviving spouses receiving D.I.C.) and is proposing that they select 11 test sites (Fort Harrison and Miles City are among those 11) to treat individuals that are under Indian Health Service, Medicare and Medicaid. They are asking for a response from these V.A. facilities concerning the above. Rich said to the best of his knowledge that the V.A. in Miles City has responded that they do not have the ability to treat non-veterans at their facility, and he has not been advised that the V.A. at Fort Harrison has made a response to date. Rich also felt this could be a plan to open up closed sections of hospitals and be able to bill the medical insurance plan to cover the cost of the operations which they cannot do now as the D.V.A. will not provide the funds. For example Fort Harrison has lost over 1/4 of its capacity since 1988 by closing one of its four wards. It was cut from a 150 bed hospital to a 113 bed hospital. Miles City now has the entire 4th floor of the V.A. Hospital there closed. By treating non-veteran patients may give the V.A. justification for preserving what little they have left. He feels what we are going to see is the V.A. systems taking in non-veteran patients over veteran objections. With the number of veterans that are turned away every day in Montana and across the United States, this is going

to be an extremely bitter pill for veterans to swallow. He asked the Board what would be their pleasure on acting on this proposal. Chairman Shepherd asked if anyone had any comments. Ruddy Reilly said that he had the impression that Fort Harrison was objecting to this program, however if Central Office says "do it" they will not have a choice in the matter. Rich also added that he had attended a National Health Care Symposium in Missoula. He said there was much opposition to a National Health Care Program and specifically attacking the Veterans Administration as they perceive the V.A. system as being the new leader in the National Health Care Program. He went on to say that he had discussed this proposal with a number of veterans and the general consensus was they did not object to non-veterans being treated if first the veterans were treated, and all the veterans were treated, and all the veterans were treated on a priority basis. Ruddy also brought up the point that we only have 26 veteran nursing home beds in Montana and if these beds were filled with incompetent non-veteran adolescents that the beds could be tied up for years. Bernie Opp said she was not opposed to a National Health Care Program but objected to the Veterans Administration being involved. If this program becomes a reality she felt the V.A. should have to guarantee that all veterans would have priority and be treated first. She also wondered why the active duty hospitals were not an option as most of them have been closed. Neil felt the Board should propose a resolution opposing the non-veteran health care in V.A. hospitals. Bernie Opp made a motion to this effect, Tot Mayer seconded the motion but suggested the resolution be modified to read that if non-veterans are provided health care in V.A. facilities that all veterans have preference. The motion was carried as modified. Rich said he would draft a resolution and get Board approval before sending it out.

The next order of business concerned our budget for 1992. Rich explained that Governor Stephens has indicated that the State's expenses are going to exceed income by an estimated 8%. The Governor has asked each Department to save 8% of their budget. We have responded to the Department that there is absolutely no way that we can save 8% in our Division. The Department has proposed that they may have excess funds to cover our share, thus alleviating the Department of Military Affairs from taking any cuts. At this time we have sufficient funds to carry us through the end of this fiscal year. Rich also made mention of the fact that most of our entire budget is personnel service and if we were subject to any cuts it would mean laying off employees or closing offices. Our Division did over 21 million dollars in

Federal benefit dollars last year plus saving the State over a million dollars in medicaid funds so if we were to lay off a single employee it would end up costing the State of Montana roughly 2 million dollars a year.

Moving on, the next topic for discussion was the Cemetery. Rich advised the Board that C&P contractors from Helena were low bidder for the completion of the 8 foot wall that will go in the center circle. Their bid was however, above the architects estimate. We met with them concerning the same and they volunteered to lower their bid by 7% which they can do, by State law, without having to re-advertise for bids. They are in hopes of having this completed before winter. Also, Montana Tunnels, which has mining operations throughout Montana, has offered to hydro-seed three acres at the Cemetery site as a donation. (We estimated the cost of two and one half acres at \$6,000.00). This is to be done around the first of November, weather permitting. One last item concerning the cemetery was the sprinkler system. The Cemetery Committee paid to have a system installed, however we were denied matching funds as the system had not been pre-approved by the Federal Cemetery Grants Program. The Cemetery Committee's feelings were that it was unfortunate not to have matching funds, however the benefits outweigh the loss. Rich also mentioned that beginning January 1, 1992, the veteran licence plates will go on sale, which will generate revenue for the Cemetery. He asked everyone to let people know, but should be aware that these can't be purchased until their existing plates are up for renewal.

The next item on the agenda concerned the D.V.A. smoking policy. Rich informed the Board that the Department of Veterans Affairs has banned all smoking in their facilities. In Miles City, a separate building was built for smokers before smoking was banned. Unfortunately, at Fort Harrison they did not do that. This has created a great many antagonistic attitudes of smokers toward the V.A. and will probably turn many of them away. At this time the patients are required to go outside, in their pajamas, (in 100 degree heat or 40 below zero) to smoke. Ruddy Reilly, SSO, reported that the V.A. was working on a building to be used for smoking but the mission changed, due to asbestos removal, and they will have to use the building for offices. As an alternative, they are going to bring in a house trailer to park beside the building that was originally intended for smoking. He noted his dissatisfaction with a house trailer because of the extreme fire danger. Also, Rich said that effective October 1, 1991, Secretary Derwinski has ordered that all cigarette sales cease in V.A.'s. This is also going to

offend many veterans. This is a problem that doesn't need to exist. The V.A. had designated smoking areas and spent thousands of dollars for smoke eaters which is now just a waste. The veterans are not only suffering but visitors and the employees are also required to follow these new rules. We are working with Senator Burns on this (we wrote to all our Congressmen and Senator Burns is the only one that responded) and he is apparently trying to get something done.


At the last meeting, the Board was given the job duties and performance standard for Rich Brown and Ruddy Reilly. Rich made the suggestion that if there are no additions or correction to these standards that their performance appraisals could be done by the entire Board at their next regular meeting. A motion was made by Tot Mayer, seconded by Bernie Opp and carried that the appraisals be done at the next meeting.

As to the appraisals for the Division employees, Rich said some had been done but there was a problem doing them during office hours in the respective offices due to interruptions by walk-in clients. There are some other problems that will have to be worked out which include the methods being used, the interpretation of the values assigned, and the time and travel expense to do them. Another system will have to be worked out which may include doing them in the Helena office followed by a conference call for discussion; or by mail, with a follow up conference call. If this does not work then there will be no other choice than to travel to each office.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:10 P.M. The next meeting has been tentatively scheduled for March 27, 1992. This will be confirmed at a later date.



Neil Shepherd, Chairman



Bernie Opp, Acting Secretary



STAN STEPHENS
GOVERNOR

State of Montana
Office of the Governor
Helena, Montana 59620
406-444-3111

April 23, 1992

The Honorable Mike Cooney
Secretary of State
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Secretary Cooney:

Please be informed that effective immediately I have appointed the following person to the Board of Veterans' Affairs in accordance with Section 2-15-1205, MCA, under the Department of Military Affairs.

Mr. George G. Hageman, Pioneer Garage Inc., P.O. Box 26, Jordan, MT, 59337 is to serve a term ending May 18, 1997, and fulfills the requirement for being honorably discharged from military service. Mr. Hageman replaces Mr. Dale Pawlowski who is deceased.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stan Stephens".

STAN STEPHENS
Governor

✓cc: Marie Hinman

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Neil Shepherd at 1:30 P.M. on April 6, 1992 at the National Guard Armory in Helena.

The following members and guests were present:

Ruben McKinney, Vice Chairman	Rich Brown, Administrator
Bernie Opp, Member	Ruddy Reilly, S.S.O.
Thaddeus Mayer, Member	Marie Hinman, P.A.
Major General Blair	Tony Cumming, Guest
Lynn Grant, Attorney General's Office	Don Buffington, Guest
	Larry Longfellow, Guest

Before the regular order of business began, Chairman Neil Shepherd wished the record to show that everyone was saddened by the passing of Board Member Dale Pawlowski. Dale was appointed to the Board in 1987 and had served one term in office. His absence will be felt by all.

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes from the previous meeting. A motion was made by Thaddeus Mayer and seconded by Bernie Opp to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as written. The motion was carried.

The Board then moved into an executive session.

The open meeting reconvened with the first topic being the resignation of the Administrator Rich Brown. Neil Shepherd indicated that all the Board members had received a letter from Mr. Brown tendering his resignation. Mr. Brown said he was officially through as of the 3rd of April, however he would be in the office unofficially until the 10th of April to take care of any unfinished business. Neil Shepherd pointed out that the Board should appoint an acting Administrator until a new one could be hired. Mr. Brown suggest that Ruddy Reilly be appointed to this position as certain documents and forms that need signatures are prepared by Marie Hinman and it could create a conflict if she also signed them. He also recommend that Mr. Reilly be given a one grade increase in pay. Ruben McKinney made a motion to this effect, seconded by Tot Mayer and it was carried.

Procedures for hiring a new Administrator were then discussed. Rich Brown noted that these were basically outlined by General Blair at the executive session but to reiterate the options, the position could be advertized first within the Division or the Department, and then go outside, or go directly to the outside. He also disclosed the fact that the budget is in such poor shape, that rather than have the entire Board screen the applications, that the initial screening could be done at the Job Service, and the final screening could be done within the Department and

Division. He again emphasized the shortage of funds in the travel budget and suggested that only a representation from the Board do the final screening. The entire Board would then do the interviews. A discussion was held with the final results being a motion was made by Tot Mayer to accept the administrative procedure prepared by Doug Booker to announce the vacancy and ask the Job Service do the initial screening. Only the applications of those that meet minimum qualifications will be forwarded. The final screening will be done by one Board member, (named by the Chairman) Marie Hinman and someone from the Department. Only the top six applicants will be interviewed by the entire Board. Ruben McKinney seconded the motion and it was carried. Chairman Shepherd asked for a volunteer from the Board to serve on the screening committee. Tot Mayer offered to represent the Board in the screening.

The Veterans Cemetery was then discussed. Rich passed out a report, which was inclusive of the month of February, on the sale of veteran license plates. He noted that only 35 Counties had reported. Rich said what he would like to see is enough revenue from the sale of the plates to fund the cemetery. The legislature did appropriate \$22,806.00 for this year to pay for a 3/4 time employee, and we will receive the same amount for next year. He emphasized however, that he did not anticipate any additional funding from the Legislature for the Cemetery and the only source of income will be the sale of license plates. Also, he would like to see a bill initiated in the legislature to charge every veteran license plate the \$10.00 fee. At the present time the P.O.W.'s, Disabled Veterans, and Survivors of Pearl Harbor are exempt from paying the fee. He felt this should be a priority for the next Administrator. Tot Mayer asked about charging the Reserve and National Guard the \$10.00 fee. Rich said this could also be a possibility. These individuals are eligible for burial at the Cemetery. A copy of the news release that was sent to the Service Organizations was passed out which explains the charges and where the money is going. He also noted that as of March 31, 1992 there are 204 individuals buried at the Cemetery. (175 veterans and 29 spouses of veterans). We also had \$16,000.00 of donated and revenue check-off money which was matched by a \$16,000.00 Federal Grant to build a \$32,000.00 Wall. The veterans groups gave us \$6,300.00 for a sprinkler system and the Montana Tunnels Inc. hydro-seeded 4 acres last fall and will be returning this month to do more. The gains over this last year have been terrific. Plans for this year include installation of a concrete base for a maintenance building, more concrete in the Center Circle and concrete steps going up to some of the grave sites. All of the labor for this will be volunteered by the Air National Guard. The veterans groups will be asked to spend the money they have collected to pay for the concrete. We will be submitting an application for a matching grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Chairman then asked for a report on the budget. Rich Brown said he anticipates that by the end of this fiscal year, the projection will be a shortage in personnel services. Factors include a pay increase and 4% vacancy saving. The Department has been able to help us for this year, however next fiscal year we will start out with a \$25,000.00 deficit.

The reduction in force policy (RIF) was then discussed. Rich gave each Board member a handout which contained work groups. (A group - Administration, B group - Service Officers, C group - Program Assistants, D group - Cemetery). He suggested that each member review these groups and set up some type of a RIF policy within the Division in the event it becomes necessary to lay individuals off due to a shortage in the budget. He also felt that the Board's policy should include whether this would be a Board policy or an Administrator's policy. He said if it were an Administrator's policy, his recommendations would be to R.I.F. the Service Officer in Helena, and then go to the Programs Assistants in the Field. Other options might be to put the Program Assistants on half time or base the decision of statistical data involving the number of transmittals or amounts of awards. Rich said that at some time in the future the Centralized Services Division of the Department of Military Affairs will be asking for a Division R.I.F. policy. Therefore a decision should be made on which positions would be eliminated or cut. He also mentioned that if the employees were aware of how the R.I.F. policy is going to be handled, they may want to start looking for other jobs now, rather than waiting until their position is cut.

Moving on the next item on the agenda, Rich Brown gave a report of the Eastern Montana Nursing Home. He said he, and a delegation of folks from Glendive, had met with persons from the Department of Administration, Architect and Engineering Division and the Department of Corrections and Human Services. When the nursing home proposal was initially presented to the legislature, the Architect and Engineering Division said it would cost \$5,669,134.00 to build a quality 100 bed nursing home. Now they are telling us, because of delays, that they could not possibly build over a 75 bed nursing home with the money they have. He felt the forecasters didn't do their homework, as building costs shouldn't have changed that much in one year's time. Rich also commented that a spokesman from the Architect and Engineering Division made a comment that the "veterans" didn't ask for enough money. He said he informed the individual that the "veterans" only selected the site, the Architect and Engineering Division hired a private firm to project the cost. He has had calls from the news media but said he preferred not to make a statement. The veterans are angry that the nursing home was reduced to 75 beds. They may want to seek legislation for additional funding to add a wing, or whatever is necessary for 25 more beds.

Election of officers for the coming year was then held. The following individuals were nominated: Ruben McKinney, Chairman, Tot Mayer, Vice Chairman, Bernie Opp, Secretary. A motion was made, seconded, and carried that these individuals be elected. Ruben suggested that the Board adopt a policy that in the event any member of the Board passes away, that a representative of the Board attend the funeral. The Board concurred.

The question was asked when a new Board member will be appointed. Rich said he had advised John Kenna from the Governor's office that Dale Pawlowski had passed away and a new appointment needed to be made, however he felt a Board member should also contact the Governor's office. He also suggested that the new member be from Eastern Montana. A discussion was held and the end result was that the best individual for the job should be selected regardless of their gender, period of service or affiliation with any certain Service Organization.

Rich wished to also advise the Board, that our Great Falls Service Officer had a one car accident while driving a State car. He was not at fault, nor was he injured but the car was determined to be totalled. We have not yet been advised by the State Motor Pool if the Division will be responsible for the cost of the car. The budget figures that were discussed earlier did not take this into consideration.

Ruddy Reilly then asked that Rich Brown elaborate on how many different suggestions have been made by the field personnel to save the Division money. Rich complimented the Field for some good ideas that were being taken under advisement. The one suggestion that has been implemented right away was changing the travel in the Great Falls and Missoula offices. This could save approximately \$1600.00 a year. Rich suggested that individuals contact their legislatures for increased funding for the Division.

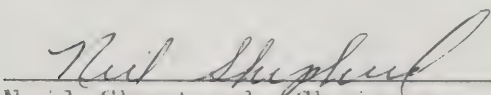
At this time Neil Shepherd told Rich Brown he was sorry he was leaving that he had done a good job for the Division.


Bernie Opp asked for a provision from the Board specifying someone as a back up person in the event Ruddy Reilly is not available. Rich Brown commented that Ruddy Reilly does have a very busy schedule this next month with hearings etc., so most of these administrative duties could be reassigned to Marie Hinman. She is knowledgeable of what needs to be done and has done a good job with many of these duties in the past. Rich also said that the reason he suggested a one grade increase for Mr. Reilly is because he does have such a full schedule and should be compensated for taking care of these other duties. Neil Shepherd asked Marie Hinman if she wished to have it in writing that she has been designated as a backup in Mr. Reilly's absence.

and also assist Mr. Reilly with payroll, leave approval, and other duties. She replied that it would be a matter of public record in the minutes of the meeting and that a letter would not be necessary.

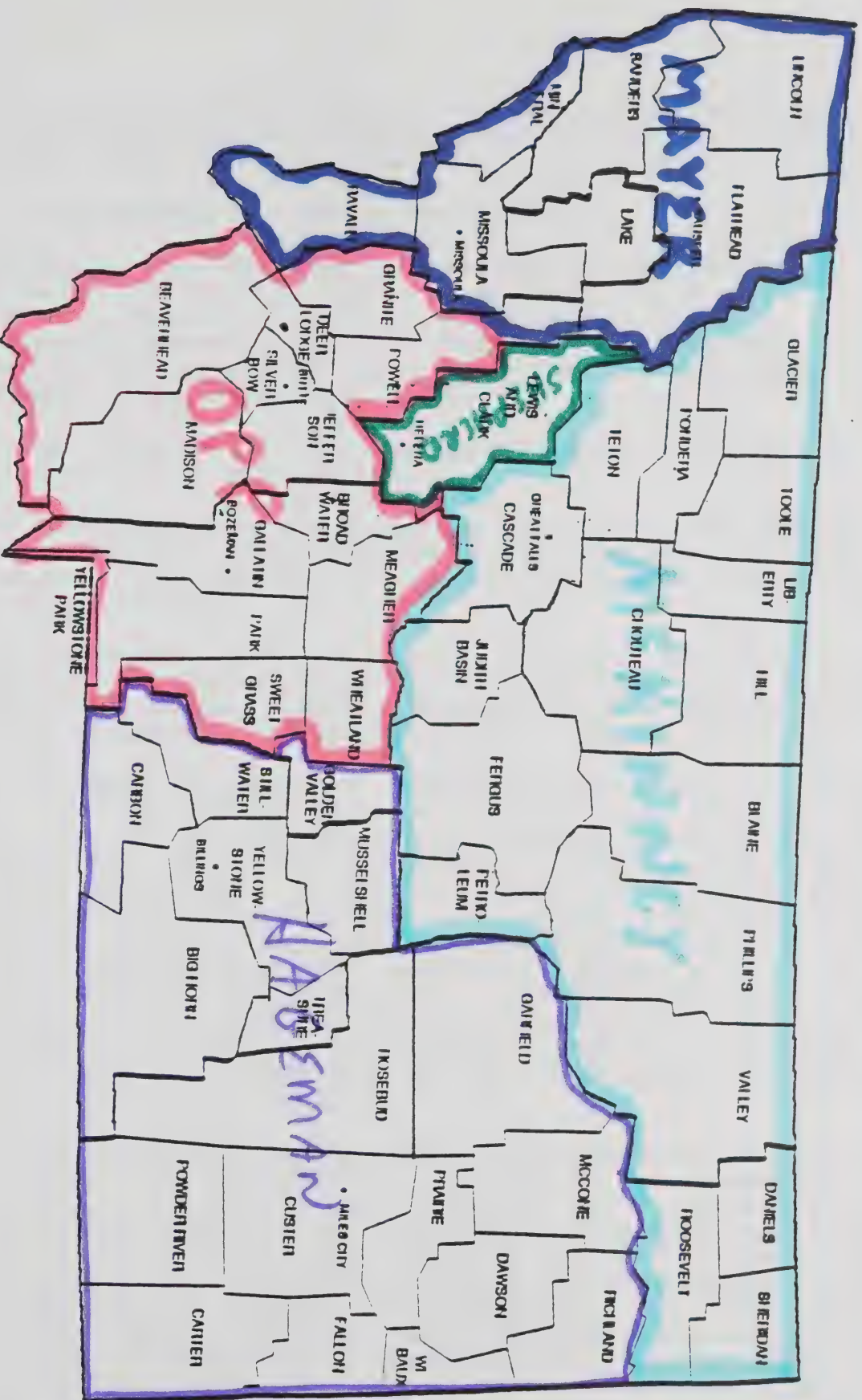
Bernie Opp then raised the question, did the Board wish to set a date for the next meeting or could the meeting be held in conjunction with the interviews? A discussion following and the end result was the interviews would be held on June 4th and the Board would stay over and hold their next meeting on June 5th.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

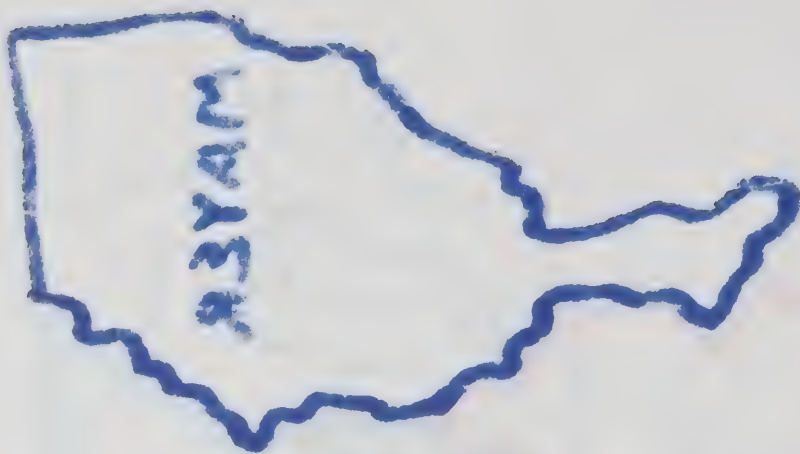

Neil Shepherd, Chairman


Bernadette Opp, Acting Secretary

MONTANA



MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY



A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Ruben McKinney at 9:00 A.M. on June 5, 1992 in the National Guard Armory in Helena.

The following members and guests were present:

Thaddeus Mayer, Vice Chairman	Don Buffington, Am. Legion
Bernadette Opp, Secretary	Fred Olson, V.F.W.
Neil Shepherd, Member	Pam Pedersen, S.O.
George Hageman, Member	Major General Gary Blair
Ruddy Reilly, Acting Admin.	Wayne Carlson, Cem. Sexton
Marie Hinman, Program Assist.	

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Chairman McKinney introduced George Hageman, newly appointed member to the Board. George is from Jordan, Montana and replaces Dale Pawlowski, who recently passed away. Everyone then in turn introduced themselves.

Chairman McKinney asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the previous meeting, which had been mailed to each member. Neil Shepherd made a motion to approve the minutes, Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

The first order of business concerned the Cemetery. Wayne Carlson, Cemetery Sexton, advised the Board that donated trees that were ready to be planted, had disappeared from the Cemetery. Fortunately the person(s) who took the trees had a change of heart as the trees were returned during the following night. Wayne has since that time, been locking the gate. He has also contacted the security personnel from the V.A. to solicit their help. They have agreed, but asked for a letter from the Board requesting this. Neil Shepherd made the recommendation that a letter petitioning the V.A. for their support in the security at the Cemetery be written. General Blair noted that he plans to expand the security within the National Guard and he would also participate in the security.

The Center Circle was then addressed. Wayne pointed out that the original plans were to hold all services in the Center Circle rather than at the grave site. The funeral directors have expressed concern because some individuals feel that part of the grieving process is to see their loved ones placed in their final resting place. A suggestion was made that only family members be permitted at the gravesite. Following a discussion it was decided that this should be predetermined, on a case by case basis. Ruben McKinney also identified the problem associated with the pre-dug graves. He emphasized the tremendous liability involved, plus the mental aspect of individuals viewing open graves. He feels we should go into a single opening procedure as

soon as possible. Wayne, who is versatile in his abilities, could operate the equipment necessary to open gravesites. As soon as funds are available, this should be a priority. Tot Mayer asked if there is a check-list for all mortuaries in the area? Wayne explained that this is the plan as soon as the Center Circle is ready for services. He also noted that we need a portable lowering device before we can implement the Center Circle procedure. Ruben said he would check to see if there is anything available in used mortuary equipment.

Another issue that needed to be addressed was the Cemetery Rules. Wayne felt the Board should be informed of a recent problem concerning the wording of Administrative rule 34.5.104. The intent of the rule was "all deceased persons must be accompanied to the Cemetery by a licenced mortuary". One funeral home contended their obligation ended once a body is cremated, therefore they did not have to accompany it to the Cemetery. An exchange of ideas and views ensued and it was decided that the rules may need to be amended to include cremated human remains, if the problem persists.

Wayne then provided the Board a brief over-view of the construction plans for this summer. With the help of volunteer labor from the Air Guard, steps and a handicapped ramp will be installed on the west bank up to the gravesites, a pad for the hearse to back into at the center circle, and the foundation and floor for the maintenance building will be poured.

In conclusion Wayne passed out a report of the most recent figures for the veteran license plate sales. As of June 4, 1992 at total of 1,933 plates have been sold. Ruben McKinney related that if every veteran in the State of Montana bought one license plate, approximately \$609,000.00 would go to fund the Cemetery. General Blair noted that if the sales continue for the next seven months as they have been running, the dollar figure for this year will be \$24,000.00 and \$40,000.00 for next year. He feels this program is great and will get better. As a consequence the Cemetery can become self sufficient. George Hageman offered to finance a veteran license plate to anyone that buys a car from him. He also suggested that he could talk to the dealers in his area to see if they would be willing to do the same. Tot Mayer offered to contact the dealers in the Missoula area to see if they would be willing to participate. Bernie Opp said, in her travels around the State, she was putting up posters in all business places.

Ruben thanked Wayne for his report, and indicated we were very lucky to have Wayne working at the Cemetery. He does an excellent job for us with a minimum amount of money. A letter of commendation was presented to him, signed by all the members of the Board.

The next item on the agenda was the Budget. General Blair first discussed the Division budget for the remainder of this year. He pointed out that the Division was short approximately \$11,000.00 but the Department is assisting the Division by making this up from other sources. For next fiscal year, the General gave a background of the budget for the entire Department and then a breakdown for the Veterans Affairs Division. At this point our Division is starting the new fiscal year with a \$29,291.00 deficit, due to the cuts made by the last special session of the Legislature. This figure is compounded by the pay plan increase which brings the figure to nearly a \$50,000.00 shortfall. He emphasized that the Division cannot cut travel and our offices are essentially rent and utilities free. Consequently, there is no other alternative than to reduce personnel. We are looking at a minimum of two individuals. He did say that he is approaching this problem by looking at the total program for the Department and is hopeful that some savings could be generated from insurance, audit fees, and utilities. He also pointed out that, in all probability, there will be another special session of the legislature and this could mean more cuts. The General has attended budget meetings and has asked for a ruling on spending monies generated by the sale of license plates to pay the Cemetery employee. The general fund appropriation of \$22,000.00 could then be reverted back to make up part of the deficit. He also said, with the Board's support, he would not hesitate to ask for an amendment. Ruben McKinney posed the question that if we were to re-write a job description for one of our Helena based employees, would we be within the law to pay them from Cemetery funds. The General's answer was "yes" he had read the statute and feels this could be done. Ruben also mentioned that he would like to put Wayne on full time rather than three quarter time as soon as possible. The General expressed that with the license plate revenue, the veterans will take care of themselves and getting the word out is the thing that needs to be done.

Moving on, the next topic for discussion concerned the phone bills. Marie Hinman asked the Board what would be their pleasure concerning their charges for long distant telephone calls made on behalf of the Division. At one time, the Board was issued telephone credit cards but subsequently changed the policy and the charges were handled on a reimbursement procedure. Neil Shepherd made a motion, which was seconded and carried to continue with the present system of reimbursement rather than credit cards.

The subject of the Division's personnel files were then discussed. Chairman McKinney summoned Ruddy Reilly to explain to the members when and why the Centralized Services Division had taken possession of our personnel files. Ruddy said this had been done some time ago by the former Administrator, but was not aware of why. A discussion ensued with the major consideration

being that the Board feels they are responsible for the Division employees, do their own hiring and firing and the files should be kept within the proximity of the Division. This resulted in a motion from Tot Mayer that the Division of Veterans Affairs take custody and maintain their own personnel files. Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

Marie Hinman apprised the Board that the Department of Military Affairs has recently given up all of their Post Office boxes and are using a mail handler firm to process their mail. They have invited our Division to participate. Although there would be advantages in using this service, there are also opposing factors to consider, the biggest being that our office works with dated material and any delays could create a loss of benefits to our veterans. She felt it would be more practical to retaining our Post Office box rather than using the mail handler system. Neil Shepherd made a motion to retain the box, Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

Ruddy Reilly advised the Board that on the 15th of June, Congress Ron Marlenee and the Edward Derwinski, Secretary of the Veterans Affairs in the President's Cabinet, will be in Billings at the Northern Hotel. Ruddy suggested that a representative of the Board may want to attend to speak up for our veterans.

At the last meeting, the Board concurred that they should have written policies concerning themselves. Marie Hinman proposed that if individual members would like to send her their suggestions she would put them together and have them ready for review at the next meeting. The Board agreed.

The next item on the Agenda concerned the areas of responsibilities for each Board member. Marie Hinman asked if the Board wished to keep the areas of responsibility the same with George Hageman taking over the territory covered by former Board member Dale Pawlowski. The answer was affirmative with Neil Shepherd putting this in the form of a motion which was seconded and carried.

The date of hire for the new Administrator was then open for discussion. Because of the vacancies savings, Ruddy Reilly suggested that the hire could be postponed until possibly December. With other reductions to our budget, this could help to make up a portion of the shortfall. He indicated that between he and Marie, the affairs of the Division are being handled. Ruben asked Ruddy if these extra duties are infringing on his other job. Ruddy didn't feel it was a problem. Ruben also complimented Marie for being able to handle everyone's job when things are in a bind. Tot Mayer asked what this would do to the selection process for the new Administrator? It was determined that if the person they selected agrees to that hiring date then there is no problem and if he refuses, then go to number two on

the list. Tot Mayer made a motion to delay the date of hire of the new Administrator to December 1, 1992, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

Training of our employees was next on the agenda. Ruddy Reilly implied that if money is available, he would like to have a training session this fall. He also expressed concern because our offices are operating with an outdated edition of Title 38 and the Code of Federal Regulations. The lack of funds have prevented the Division from purchasing new ones. Don Buffington from the American Legion proposed that the American Legion would purchase new C.F.R.'s for our field offices. The offer was accepted. Ruben asked if it would be more constructive and cost effective to have Ruddy go to the individual field offices with a training plan rather than having it as a group. Ruddy's reply was, because of the time element involved, he didn't feel his schedule would permit it. Tot Mayer made a motion, that if funds are available, that a two day training session be held in September. Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried. It was also decided that this would be in conjunction with the next Board meeting and Great Falls was considered as a location.

Under "other" business, Ruben McKinney reported that the Great Falls office has lost their Green Thumb worker and is in desperate need of another. Their copier is also broken and would like to have it replaced. Ruben offered to see what he could do to get them a copier at no cost to the Division. Marie Hinman also made mention that the Department is looking into buying perhaps 3 copy machine for the Division, however this may not be for awhile.

Bernie Opp asked what is the status of the computers that the General is looking into for our offices? Marie answered that she hasn't heard anything more on this.

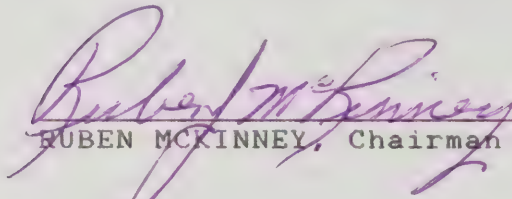
Ruddy Reilly advised the Board that a gentleman by the name of Underkoffler will be the new Director of the V.A. at Fort Harrison. They expect him to take over his duties later this month.

Ruben then called for comments for the good of the order. Fred Olson, V.F.W. mentioned that there is a problem with the counties not having veterans license plates available for the veterans to purchase. He contacted Dean Roberts from the Department of Transportation and he said there is a problem, however he had put out a memo to all the county offices that if they do not have the plates available, they can issue a 45 day extension (sticker) to anyone wishing a veteran license plate. Fred's opinion was there were a lot of sales lost because the plates were not available. Neil Shepherd commented that he had run into the same problem in Chester.

Fred also advised the Board that he is a member of the Cemetery committee and will bring up any matters discussed at the meeting today to the committee. He will also motivate the committee to start another donation campaign.

Fred also offered to assist the Division in any way with our next training session. He has got some training films that he feels would be very beneficial to all our people.

The date for the next meeting was tentatively set for some time in September. There being no further business, the regular meeting adjourned. The Board reconvened into an executive session to discuss personnel matters.


RUBEN MCKINNEY, Chairman


BERNIE OPP, Secretary

May 20, 1986

The Honorable Jim Waltermire
Secretary of State
State Capitol
Helena, Montana 59601

Dear Secretary Waltermire:

Please be informed that, effective May 19, 1986, I have appointed Mr. Robert A. Durkee, P.O. Box 851, Helena, Montana 59624 and Mr. John L. Gallagher, P.O. Box 361, Havre, Montana 59501 to the Board of Veterans' Affairs in accordance with Section 2-15-1205, MCA.

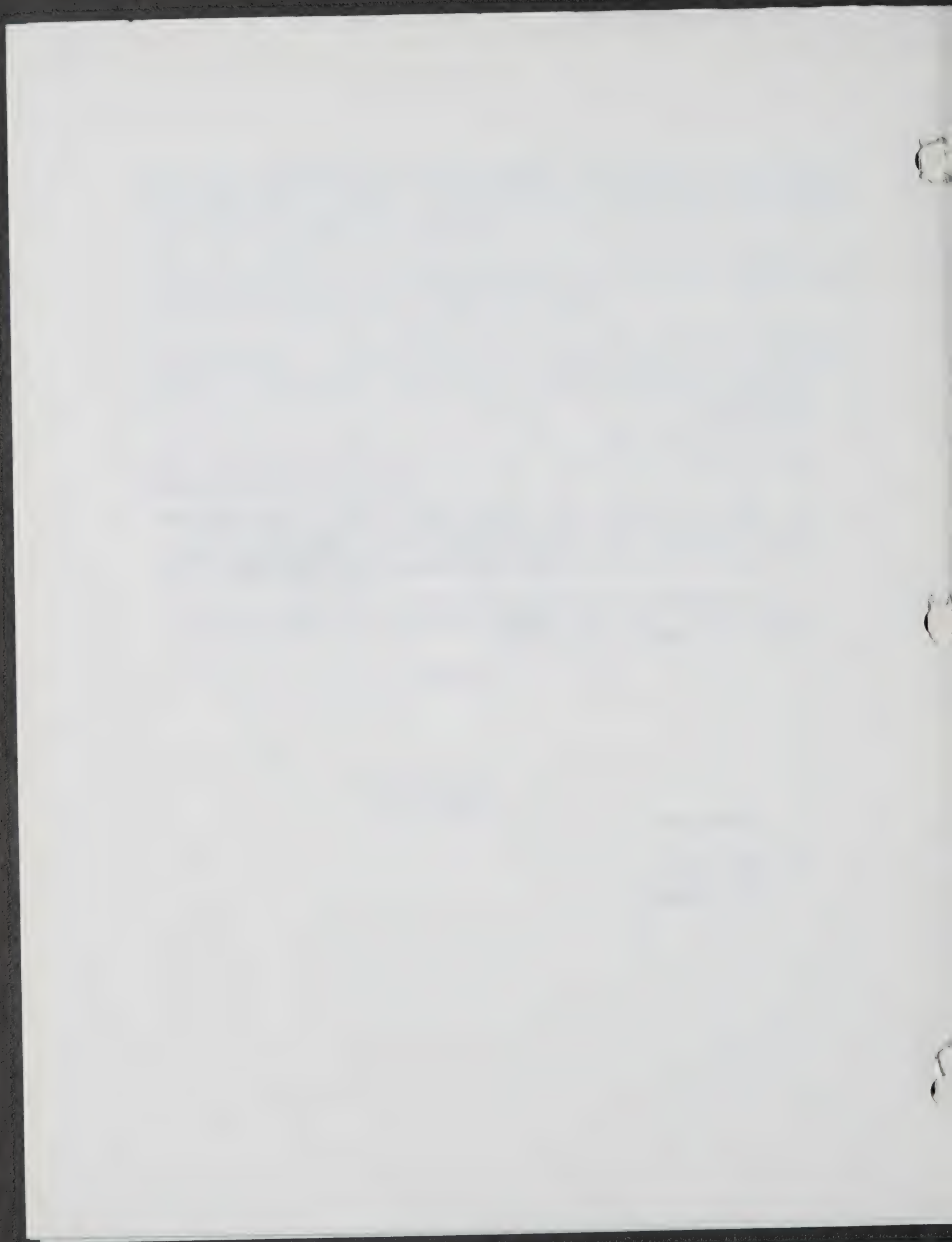
Mr. Durkee succeeds John E. Grauman and will serve a term ending May 18, 1991. Mr. Gallagher succeeds Vince Caciari and will serve a term ending May 18, 1990.

Sincerely,

TED SCHWINDEN
Governor

cc: General Duffy

bcc: Rich Brown
Robert Durkee
John Gallagher



A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held in Great Falls, Montana on November 18, 1992 in conjunction with the Division training session.

Chairman Ruben McKinney called the meeting to order with the following members and guests present:

Bernie Opp, Secretary	Ruddy R. Reilly, Acting Administrator
Neil Shepherd, Member	Marie S. Hinman, Senior Program Asst.
George Hageman, Member	Veterans Affairs Division Staff

James F. Jacobsen, who will assume his duties as Administrator on December 1, 1992; Doug Booker, Administrator of Centralized Services; and Frank Graham, Personnel Officer, were also present. It should be noted that Board member Thaddeus Mayer was unable to attend.

The meeting opened with the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Chairman McKinney then asked each person to introduce themselves for the benefit of those new to the Division.

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. A motion was made by Neil Shepherd, seconded by Bernie Opp and carried that the minutes be approved as written.

The Division budget was then reviewed for fiscal years 94 and 95. Doug Booker passed out the figures that have been submitted and are in the Governor's executive budget. He explained that these numbers are based on what was spent for FY 92, with increases in base travel. This will allow the Administrator to visit all the offices and fund at least one or perhaps two training meetings for the field offices. These figures can be changed but we will need to go through the Governor's office and have his blessing before asking the Legislature to amend any numbers. He intimated that it is General Blair's supposition all budgets will be trimmed down and these numbers will not hold. Mr. Booker did however indicate that if General Blair remains in his current position, he will do all he can to make the Division's budget as whole as possible. Mr. Booker also noted that it would be conducive to have Board representation at the Legislative to help carry this budget throughout the whole session. He also referenced the deficit in the Division's funds for last year and noted that the Department had transferred money from other Divisions to sustain the shortage.

The cemetery budget was then discussed. A history of this funding dates back to the last session of the legislature in

which veterans groups went before the Legislature and asked for approximately \$100,000.00 for operations at the cemetery. The full appropriations committee felt this figure was not realistic but did want to help. Doug said he worked with members of the committee to come up with a fair amount of money for the cemetery. The end result being we received \$22,806.00 of general fund money for 92 and \$22,795.00 for 93 (HB179). This money was for personnel services (3/4 time employee) and operating money. In 92 that money was spent for the sexton position and operations. In 93, during the last special session, General Blair went to the Legislature to see if we could use this money in general operations of the Division as well. It was subsequently written into the Appropriations Bill that this money could also be used for general operations of the Division. This was based on the premise that there was enough license plate money coming in to pay the sexton's salary, plus some operating expenses at the cemetery. At this same time, the Department was faced with about \$115,000.00 across the board reductions. The percentage share for Veterans Affairs Division amounted to \$27,000.00. By using HB 179 money the Veterans Affairs was able to make up all but about \$4,200.00. In the 94/95 budget, the assumption being that there is no general fund money going to the Cemetery anymore, (HB 179 was a one time appropriation) the license plate money, donations, and plot allowance would cover the expenses of the cemetery. A good history of ongoing operational costs at the cemetery has not yet been established, therefore there will probably be some subsequent refinement. George Hageman questioned if we were putting too much emphasis on the license plate money. It was explained that the original purchase affords the Cemetery \$6.00, and upon renewal the revenue is \$10.00. An estimate of income generated from the inception of the sales until next June (end of the fiscal year) is \$60,000.00. After deducting operating expenses for this year we could conceivably have \$30,000.00 to \$40,000.00 net at the end of this fiscal year, and \$50,000.00 for next year. Doug believes that we need to tie the money up as there is a general concern that when you go to the Legislature and there is a balance in an account they can zero it out. There is a statute that he feels would be wise to get under, that makes us exempt from the automatic review of accounts with surplus money. This would require someone to write a Bill and have a legislature sponsor it. Discussion followed concerning who to ask to do this and Doug offered his help on finding the statute, etc. Doug commented that General Blair feels the license plate money would eventually generate enough revenue to start another State Cemetery, perhaps in the eastern part of Montana. The cemetery budget was put together, based on revenue from license plates, plot allowance and donated money. The estimated figure is \$37,000.00 the first year and \$33,000.00 the next year. The balance would be used for construction in the future. We have submitted a budget to Architect and Engineering, Long Range

Building Program to be included in the States Plan, but the money will still be controlled by the Division. When enough cash is there to do a project, (including a Federal match) we will contact A.&E., outline the project we want done and they will actually control the construction from that point on. There could be an option of leaving all that money under Division control, but from Doug's point of view, the Cemetery is starting to be big business and when you are talking projects, you want quality work and assurance that its done correctly. In the event something goes wrong and you need to go back to the contractor, the State has a procedure to do this. Doug gave the Board a handout of what has been presented to the long range building program, and that he, Marie and Ruddy had met with them concerning \$75,000.00 per year of spending authority for any cemetery construction. A motion was made by George Hageman, seconded by Bernie Opp and carried that all major cemetery projects be handled through A.&E., and the long range building program be given the authority to control any funds for the project. Ruben McKinney volunteered to contact Legislatures Roger De Bruycker (republican, and a veteran) and his sister-in-law Jane DeBruycker (democrat) to carry a Bill in the House protecting the Cemetery funds. We will contact someone from the Senate to do the same. It should also be noted that any project over \$25,000.00 has to go before the Legislature.

George Hageman asked how the budget process works in regards to requests for general fund money. Doug replied that it is his feeling that honesty is the best policy which makes all monies defensible. George then asked if it has been taken into consideration that in the next few years the program of the Veterans Affairs will change because of the number of ageing veterans that will be needing assistance, and have we built in the need for more money for expanded services in the future. Doug replied that this is something we need to work on in the next two years to come up with the type of information ready to support additional money. George also asked who takes care of Indian veterans. Ruddy replied that we do. George then asked if the reservation give us any funding to help. Ruddy answered no. Jerry Collins was hired by the tribe to assist veterans but as he only works part time he doesn't take care of that many clients.

Doug also went through our current budget and explained that we have approximately \$513,000.00 available. On the Cemetery side, in the plot allowance, we have \$37,788.00 of spending authority. Estimating from past statistics, we could reduce that amount to \$8,000.00 and transfer the spending authority to other places within the Department. We have \$45,000.00 of spending authority for Federal match money, \$9,600.00 in donations and \$31,500 in license plate money. Doug said if anyone has any questions or concerns feel free to contact him.

The next item on the agenda was Board guidance and/or directions for the new Administrator, Jim Jacobsen. Chairman McKinney opted to postpone this until the executive session. Jim Jacobsen concurred and asked for a few minutes to talk to the group. He related his educational, military and personal background. He emphasized that he plans to visit all the offices and get to know each person individually. He feels we have two important features that he will be busy sorting out. One is the mission and the other is people. He diagramed on the blackboard how he will classify each part of these elements and how they impact the Division. He also said he felt the training session had been great and is looking forward to his new job. He concluded with the statement that the Veterans Affairs Division has no problems, only challenges and situations.

Marie Hinman gave an update on the Cemetery. She stated that the Division is in the process of developing a contract with McKenna Engineering Firm for the professional services performed at the Cemetery. McKenna Engineering Firm has worked with the Division since the inception of the Cemetery. For designated projects the Firms costs are built in, however, for other services, (plot layout, meetings, etc) we are charged an hourly rate. There is a decisive need to establish a procedure for retaining these services and also a necessity to have control over what is spent for this type of services. She further stated that each member had been furnished a draft copy of the contract. If there are no objections from the Board, we will proceed with the contract. The Board had no objections.

Another matter Marie opened for discussion, concerned the Cemetery Committee. Each Board member was sent a copy of a letter which defined how the committee was formed. The letter clearly states that the committee's position is that of advisory. The committee is unquestionably valuable to the cemetery, however there is a definite misunderstanding as to what their function is in relationship to the Division. Two recent areas of concern are the committee's objection on how the Division is spending cemetery money, and Ruddy Reilly's, (Senior Service Officer) disapproval of the amount of time Division personnel are dedicating to clerical support for the committee. Bobbie Kokoruda, Helena Service Officer who is presently presiding over the committee spoke highly of the committee and said she felt they were valuable but needed guidelines to work under. Marie presented some proposed by-laws that Bobbie had written up, and suggested that a draft be sent to the Board to review and offer suggestions and/or opinions. The Committee will then have the opportunity to accept or reject them as written. Ruddy Reilly gave an overview of what had transpired with the committee to date. At that point Jim Jacobsen submitted that he would like to accept responsibility of the committee and feels he can work

with them to everyone's satisfaction. Doug Booker mentioned that someone (an assumption being a committee member) had gone to a legislator with questions on the validity of the Division spending Cemetery money. The legislative auditor's office in turn reviewed the records. Their report indicated there were no improprieties in the expenditures.

Marie Hinman then read a report from Wayne Carlson, cemetery Sexton. Wayne documented what had transpired at the cemetery this past summer, the projects completed and the projects we will work on next summer. Marie also asked what the Board's perspective would be on changing the cemetery sexton's position from 3/4 time to full time. Neil Shepherd questioned if the money was available to do this. Doug Booker answered yes, but there are several steps that need to be taken to change this. He doesn't feel there will be a problem, since it is not general fund money. Chairman McKinney spoke in favor of this proposal indicating he felt Wayne is a valuable employee. Neil Shepherd made a motion that we make the sexton position full time if possible, Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was passed.

One last cemetery item, Ruben McKinney asked about having a mortician on the Cemetery Committee. Bobbie replied that it would have to be up to the committee as they are made up of members from the Service Organizations. Ruben's concern was that there may be irregularities on how we handle our burials and a person who is in the mortician field would be able to offer direction and/or guidance. Cheryl Heald, Service Officer from Billings, knows a gentlemen from Billings who is a mortician and also a member of a service organization. He is quite interested in our cemetery and she feels confident that he would fill this position. Ruben asked Cheryl to check into this.

Moving on, Marie reported our office in Butte, located in the Navy Reserve Center, had to move due to closure of the Center. We did find office space in the Finlin Hotel for a cost of \$200.00 a month including utilities. We have asked for a supplemental appropriation to cover the remainder of this year. This has gone through the Governor's office and now needs Legislative approval. Art and Lee Ann reported that they are happy with their new quarters.

Ruddy reported that he had recently attended a meeting which, among other things, addressed having adequate insurance to cover your car when using it for business. In checking, this would increase your premium by 20%. Ruddy said he feels the State should pay the difference. A suggestion was made that we use State cars, however referencing a recent accident in a State car, the State does not carry comprehensive insurance and the Division is liable. A discussion followed, and this will be looked into.

Ruddy also brought up the fact that the Division has inadequate funding in our budget to buy publications which are essential for the operations of each office. Neil Shepherd volunteered to check with the American Legion about buying C.F.R.'s for each office. Jim Jacobsen asked each field office to list any publications they may need, send them to Ruddy and we will start from there.

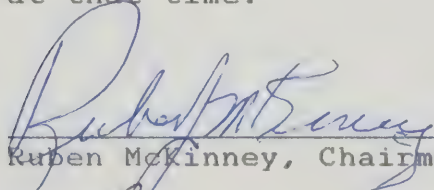
The next item on the agenda was personnel records. Marie advised the Board that the Department is developing a new method of record keeping and each member had been mailed a draft copy of the proposal. She had spoken with Frank Graham, the Personnel Officer for the Department in Centralized Services, and he said Centralized Services only interest in our personnel files pertains to position and payroll forms. They have proposed that they make copies of any documents or forms from our files necessary to carry out their functions, and any new documents that are generated, they will supply us with a copy. We will have physical custody of the complete file in our office. Frank Graham added that the Department has been under scrutiny from the Department of Administration because Military Affairs does not have the personnel functions centralized. Clearly, Centralized Service Division is to support the Board and the Division administratively and have no interest in managing our files, but some of the documents that are routinely part of the standard state employees personal file need to be in a centralized location so they can perform the administrative support functions. Eventually we hope to get to the point where performance appraisals, training records, etc. would be resident in the procedural personal file. The D.O.A. is looking at the idea that the personnel files should be in a centralized location. The Department's position is that any records the Board or Administrator might need for the day to day operations, should be immediately available. Frank said he also thinks he can offer the Board and Division better services in terms of handling the personnel management function if all the information is readily available. He feels that between the two Divisions that the details can be worked out as to how paper passes back and forth. George Hageman remarked that he has read the draft and feels too many people have access to the records. Frank said he has already had similar comments and he feels that anyone outside the Department should be under the supervision of the Administrator of Centralized Services or the Personnel Officer. Board member Opp noted that on the list of those having access, the Board was not mentioned. Frank Graham said he would include them. Chairman McKinney asked if we needed a motion to formalize this. Bernie said this had been done at the last meeting. Frank Graham indicated that he, Doug Booker and Marie, could work out these details.

Marie Hinman passed out the Division statistics for the period ending June 30, 1992. The report has a fiscal year total for the Division and also a breakdown per office, indicating the percent of increase or decrease. Marie commented on the Miles City office saying that the figure shown does not reflect a clear picture due to the increase in the territory covered by that office.

Marie also exhibited a graph prepared by Wayne Carlson showing the license plate sales for each County. It was noted that there were still two or three Counties that hadn't sold any plates. Chairman McKinney complimented Wayne for his efforts.

Before the meeting concluded, Chairman McKinney called for comments for the good of the order from each individual. A summary of the comments were that the training session was the best one for the past several years and the employees enjoyed being able to get together. Bernie Opp asked about the status of our offices getting used computers and Doug Booker replied that he feels there will be a surplus of these machines in the future for us. George Hageman questioned if there were any statistics on how many veterans were migrating into the State. Lee Barta expressed that he feels in his area that at least 50% of his walk-in clients are new arrivals to the State. George referred to the easy accessibility Montana has to the welfare program and noted that there is an increasing number of people moving to Montana. If a good majority of these folks are veterans, our budget is going to have to increase to accommodate these individuals. He suggested that perhaps we should start tracking these veterans to get some type of count so we can increase our budget accordingly.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for March unless there is a need for the Board to testify at the Legislature, then a meeting can be held at that time.


Ruben McKinney, Chairman


Bernadette Opp, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held in Helena, Montana on February 8, 1993.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ruben McKinney with the following members and guests present:

Thaddius Mayer, Vice Chairman
Bernie Opp, Secretary
Neil Shepherd, Member
George Hageman, Member
James Jacobsen, Administrator
Ruddy Reilly, S.S.O.
Marie Hinman, S.P.A.

Hal Manson, Guest
Tony Cumming, Guest
Dick Baumberger, Guest
Fred Olson, Guest
George Poston, Guest

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman McKinney then introduced the new Administrator, James Jacobsen, followed by everyone in the room introducing themselves and identifying their affiliation.

Neil Shepherd made a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as written, Tot Mayer seconded the motion and it was carried.

The next three items on the agenda, Major General Prendergast, Doug Booker (budget), and a portion of the Cemetery issues were postponed until later in the meeting.

Other matters concerning the cemetery were (1) License plate sales for the month of January totalled \$3,259.00 bringing the total sales for FY 93 to \$19,554.00. In March the revenue should increase, as renewals will net the Cemetery \$10.00 per plate versus the \$6.00 we are now getting for the initial purchase. Jim Jacobsen remarked that he is anxious for HB 404 to pass which would enable the Division to solicit funds and promote the sale of license plates. (2) As recommended by the Cemetery Committee, we have the cost estimate from McKenna Engineering for the lettering and seals to be placed on the wall at the Cemetery. The lettering would say "Montana State Veterans Cemetery" and centered underneath, the service plaque for Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard. We also are hopeful of getting a State Seal to place on top. The materials will cost \$1,130.00 and the installation would amount to an additional \$1,000.00. Mr. McKenna has indicated however, that there is a possibility of the labor being donated. Bernie made a motion to have Administrator Jacobsen proceed with the above stated project, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried. (3) There is a definite need for a pump pressure switch at the Cemetery to allow the irrigation system to operate automatically without manually having to turn the pump on. The way the system operates now, the Cemetery Sexton has to go to the Cemetery in the

evenings and on weekend to manually turn the pump on and allow enough pressure to build before any irrigation valves can be opened. The cost is \$900.00 installed. Neil Shepherd made a motion to purchase the pump pressure switch, George Hageman seconded the motion and it was carried. (4) During the Winter months Wayne Carlson, (Cemetery Sexton) is assigned to work in the Helena office. When the need arises (funerals, taking care of the flags etc.,) he travels to the Cemetery. During the summer, he is stationed at the Cemetery and travels to the Helena office and/or other places to pick up or purchase items for the Cemetery. Wayne has indicated that he would like to be reimbursed for using his own vehicle. A discussion followed with the end results being the Board concurring that a travel claim could be submitted by the Sexton for extra travel necessary to do his job. Jim complimented Wayne on the excellent job he is doing. George Hageman asked if we have ever been able to find a steel cart to transport the bodies from the center circle to the gravesite. The answer was "no". George said he has an individual trying to find one that could be donated to the Cemetery.

Issues that were discussed at the November meeting that Jim assumed the responsibility of dealing with were:

(1) Cemetery position going full time - this has been approved in our budget: (2) Contract for McKenna Engineering - Mr. McKenna has agreed to, and signed the contract for FY 93 which will end June 30, 1993. This involves work he does for the Cemetery and the terms are \$60.00 an hour, not to exceed \$1,000.00 in a year. At the beginning of the new fiscal year, a new contract will be negotiated. Jim also complimented Bob McKenna, who has been totally supportive of the Cemetery, and has worked with the Division since 1987, when we buried the first veteran. He went on to say however, that the Cemetery is rapidly growing and feels the time has come that the Architecture and Engineering Division of the Department of Administration needs to be involved in the planning and construction. Mr. McKenna is well aware of this and is familiar with the bidding process. (3) Rent in the Bozeman office - Jim advised the Board that when he visited our office in Bozeman, he met the gentleman in charge of the building but the rent issue was not mentioned. Due to a previous agreement, we have requested \$4,000.00 in our budget to pay rent, however if the Legislature elects to deny our request then the office space is rent free. Jim also felt the area where our office is located is not ideal but perhaps with taller dividers and a different furniture arrangement, it would be more workable and private. The rent in Butte is also a concern as it was not in our current budget, however we had no choice but to move. The present space in the Finlen Complex is quite functional and the problem with security has been solved with locks for each file cabinet.

(4) The possibility of the State of Montana paying for a business rider on their automobile insurance - Jim investigated this and was informed that the \$.28 per mile travel reimbursement an individual receives is, in part, to pay for additional insurance on vehicles used for State business purposes. He also was quoted by his own insurance company that to add a business rider, the premium would almost double. The question was asked about using State cars, and the answer was yes, we can use State cars where they are available. (5) Directions to maintain our own Personnel records rather than Centralized Services - an agreement has been reached whereby, Centralized Services would make a duplicate file containing only those records necessary to carry out the payroll functions. They will furnish us copies of any documents they prepare. The files are secured in a locked file cabinet with Jim and Marie having keys. Anyone wishing to look at the records must go through Jim and in his absence Marie. (6) Making the Cemetery funds perpetual, Jim advised that this has been taken care of through HB 404, introduced by Roger DeBruycker. This does not mean that someday the Legislature could not extricate the funds, however it does protect us from going to a zero balance at the end of each fiscal year. (7) In the area of publications - Ruddy and Jim, after doing a study, have compiled a list of publications our offices should have. The cost being \$3,750.00 basic issue for the entire Division and \$1250.00 on an annual basis for renewal. This is on a list of priorities when the money becomes available along with many other items, such as office equipment, that we have been doing without. Total cost amounts to between \$30,000.00 and \$40,000.00. Jim said he has been also working with the Adjutant General to perhaps acquire excess property from the Air Force. (8) Monthly statistics were reviewed and as mentioned by George Hageman at the November meeting, Jim did an inquiry to several sources to see if anyone was tracking the number of veterans that were migrating into the State. We have yet to find anyone that is capturing this data. Our power of attorney count continues to increase by about 2,000 a year bringing our total for this year to about 65,000. We are at the half-way point in our monetary statistics and show an increase of 31% over the same time period last year. A projection would indicate that we will total 34 million dollars for this year compared to 26 million dollars last year. That is a significant increase. If you compare our budget which is 500,000 dollars to the 30 million dollars we bring in, for every dollar we spend to operate, we bring \$50.00 in to the State in spendable money by the veterans. Discussion followed concerning number of people that are moving to Montana and Tot Mayer mentioned that he thought that the Bureau of Economic Affairs with the University of Montana could possibly track this information as they have published statistics on similar data. He said he would get Jim the information. Board member Opp also mentioned that there had

been discussion concerning a mortician serving on the Cemetery Committee, and what had been done concerning the same. Jim said he brought this to the attention of the Cemetery Committee and they were agreeable. He then checked to see if there was any State Agency such as the Board of Morticians that could be involved, but there was not. He was aware of the gentlemen from Billings that had volunteered to do this but felt, because of the liability involved, it would be better to have someone locally. He then talked with Mickey Nelson, who is the County Coroner and also a licensed mortician, and Mr. Nelson proposed that he could be that individual on the Committee. The Board concurred.

Going on to other business, Chairman McKinney has visited several offices around the State and they brought several issues to his attention that they had not felt comfortable discussing them at the last meeting. These items were: (1) Would be feasible for each office to have an allotted budget. The concerns centered around some offices being more conservative than others and felt that would be a more fair way. Jim answered that the budget has to have central control but he was not opposed to offices doing additional travel etc. if the need arises and funds are available. (2) A request for a readout of all offices phone bills. They felt that some offices were being reprimanded unfairly for their phone usage. Jim said he will be sending copies of individual bills to each office and those offices that need to consolidate their calls will be notified. Marie said that the discussion that took place at the training session wasn't intended to criticize anyone, only to make everyone aware of the need to conserve. (3) Another item concerned prepaid expenses to the training sessions. Marie explained that the State, in an effort to avoid issuing advanced travel, offers American Express Credit Cards to all employees, at no cost. If the travel claim is submitted timely, the reimbursement is always received well in advance of the receipt of the credit card billing. She did identify that some individuals do not want credit cards, however this is a State policy and the Division has no control. She also added that if an individual has a special situation, notify the Helena office and he can be handled on a case by case basis. (4) Copies of the monthly statistical report not being sent out timely. Jim replied that we can't figure the statistics until we get the field reports and then it takes a few days to put it together. Jim also felt the method being used to put these reports together needs to be revised and he will be working on doing that.

The meeting then recessed to accommodate members of various service organization, Mr. Joe Brand, V.F.W. Lobbyist and Representative Bobby Pavlovich who wished to discuss the Montana State Cemetery. Mr. Brand, being the spokesman for the group said it had recently come to his attention via the service

organizations and the Cemetery Committee that the Board of Veterans Affairs had authorized the diversion of funds, appropriated by the Legislature for the Cemetery, for other purposes. The Cemetery Committee and the Service Organizations were upset because they had not been informed. Their intentions are to propose a Bill to include a new 9 member Board, appointed by the Governor, with authority from the Legislature to handle expenditures, receive money and would have full control of the present State Veterans Cemetery or any other Veterans Cemetery built by the State, with the Division Administrator being the Secretary to this Board. The Bill would also include broadening the base for the sale of license plates. Mr. Brand indicated HB 404 and their Bill should be heard together and perhaps a compromise could be reached. Several other members of the various Service organizations voiced their opinion, followed by George Hageman, member of the Board of Veterans Affairs, who said he felt that there was a serious misunderstanding and recounted that at the meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs in June of 1992, the Board had authorized Gary Blair, the Adjutant General for the Department of Military Affairs, to include Cemetery money combined with Division funds to make up the money the Legislature had asked to be returned to the General Fund. It was also noted that an American Legion member and a V.F.W. member (who is also a delegate to the Cemetery Committee) were at that meeting and the gentleman from the V.F.W. was quoted, in the minutes, as saying he would advise the committee of any matters that were discussed at the meeting. It was Mr. Hageman opinion that the committee and the two service organizations should have known about this the day after it happened. He further went on to say that he believes the Cemetery Committee has been very effective with most of their recommendations being accepted, and are doing a fantastic job. After much discussion concerning the same, it was determined, after receiving this new information, that each of the service organizations would consult with their officers concerning the same and would inform the Board of their final decision before the close of the day. At this point, the meeting adjourned for lunch.

The meeting reconvened with a review of the Legislative actions. Jim Jacobsen began with the sub-committee that reviews our budget. The committee had visited the Department of Military Affairs and Jim had briefed them on the Division. They also toured the Cemetery and the V.A. Center at Fort Harrison. Other areas focused on testimony for a supplemental appropriation (\$1,800.00) for office rent in Butte, and appearing before the Long Range Planning Board with the projects for the Cemetery for the next two years. (The spending authority being \$75,000 for each year which includes the Federal matching money). Other Bills introduced concerning veterans are: a Bill that clarifies the definition of veterans for employment preference; a Bill

that addresses employment compensation which is Desert Storm/Desert Shield related; a Bill to create a Commission to plan for and erect a Pearl Harbor Statue that will be placed on Capitol lawn; a Bill that would coincide with the present law that permits a disabled veteran to purchase a disabled license plate for \$5.00, and allow the same 100% disabled veterans to purchase veteran license plates for additional cars for the \$10.00 fee only; and on the proposed Veterans Nursing Home in Glendive, the Department of Institutions, being faced with budget cuts, is offering up the cigarette tax money to help the shortfall in the General Fund monies. They are also investigating the possibility of a fund, set aside for veterans, that the veteran could draw on to offset their expenses in a nursing home of their choice. Jim also went on to say that he is in constant contact with the various veteran lobbyists and is kept informed on the status.

The meeting moved on to the Veterans Awareness Programs, and Jim explained that the program is a comprehensive effort by the American Legion to conduct a series of programs in selected cities across the State of Montana to advise veterans and their families of their entitlements to veterans benefits. The programs will begin on Saturday February 13, 1993 in Missoula and will work their way around the State. Ruddy who is the Senior Service Officer for the Division, is also the State Service Officer for the American Legion and will be in attendance at all of the functions. Our State Service Officers will be asked to attend when the meetings come to their area.

With regard to Division matters, Jim wished to inform the Board that he has just recently sent his second publication (copy to Board) to the field personnel and has had favorable feedback. He is taking into consideration all of their suggestions and needs, and as time and money become available he will deal with each item on a case by case basis.

The current budget is lacking in communications but there is excess money in salaries and travel which he will transfer to make up the difference. Next month when we receive our SBAS reports we can budget for the remainder of the year.

Concerning training sessions, Jim asked what the Boards pleasure was on having more than one session a year. He is aware that the laws and regulations are changing constantly and the field people need to keep informed. If two sessions are not possible, the other alternative would be, when he has gained the knowledge concerning veteran benefits, in his routine visits to the offices he could carry the information on a one on one basis. After a discussion it was determined that one training session would be sufficient and September would be the month of choice.

Jessie Brown, the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs, will be in Miles City on the 6th of March, and Jim feels, in his capacity as Administrator, it is important he be there. He also planned on incorporating visits to our Bozeman, Billings, and Miles City offices. Also, Lee Barta, Service Officer has also invited Jim to speak at the D.A.V. Chapter in Kalispell in April and he would like to do that. The Board gave their approval.

MG Gene Prendergast, the Adjutant General then joined the meeting. He wished to thank everyone for appearing in support of the Department budget at the Legislature. He complimented our staff on doing a super job and expressed 100% support for the Division. He affirmed he would stand behind our Division equally along with the other Divisions within the Department of Military Affairs. He is aware of the cemetery issues, and would like to be kept informed. Jim intervened by saying that there had been a meeting earlier in the day and we were awaiting word to see if a compromise could be reached. Board member Tot Mayer also related to the General that he is the President of the Montana Chapter of the Retired Officers Association who has 3.8 million members. Mr. Mayer will be going to Washington D.C. in April to a meeting of all the State Chapter presidents. Tot offered his assistance with regard to the Montana National Guard if needed. Ruben thanked the General and also Doug Booker for all the support they have given us. Doug spoke about the budget and feels that we will have sufficient funds to carry us for the remainder of this fiscal year. We should watch communications and travel and not count too heavily on the supplemental request for Butte rent. Jim wished to publicly thank Doug for all his support.

A message was received at this time from Larry Longfellow, Quartermaster for the V.F.W. who said he had consulted with officials from the V.F.W. and they were in agreement to drop their new Cemetery Bill if broadening the base for the sale of license plates was included in HB 404. The American Legion concurred, with the exception that would want the Advisory Committee to be appointed by the Governor. Jim said he had been in the process of doing this, and now would proceed. He will be contacting the Service Organizations to have them nominate individuals to serve on this Council. He also quoted the law he is using as his guideline. He will be calling a meeting of the present Cemetery Committee as soon as possible to activate this new procedure. Neil Shepherd made a motion directing Mr. Jacobsen to take the necessary action to form a Governor appointed Cemetery Advisory Council, Bernie Opp Seconded the motion and it was carried. Jim asked for Board approval to invite representatives for the various Service Organizations and a spokesman from the Cemetery Advisory Council to attend all meetings of the Board of Veterans Affairs. The Board concurred.

Jim also wished to make the Board aware of the following events that will be taking place and he and/or the Division will be involved:

1. General Prendergast is holding a total quality management conference next week. He has been asked to attend. 2. The V.A. hospital is having a Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Day and we have assisted them by providing a proclamation signed by the governor honoring these veterans. He also added that he had spent time with the Director and the Deputy Director at the V.A. and his feelings were they would be very supportive of the Division. 3. The V.A. is sponsoring a POW Recognition Day. The Division has facilitated this Program in the past and the V.A. has requested our assistance again this year. The Division will do whatever we can to help.

Jim remarked that since he has taken over his duties as Administrator, he has noticed two things, people confuse our Division with the Federal V.A. and they have no idea of what is involved with the claims process to obtain V.A. benefits. Marie had given Jim an article that he wished to share with the Board. "Why is it necessary for agencies outside of the Federal Government to do service work for veterans? The laws under which the Federal V.A. operates, restrict it from developing, prosecuting and presenting claims against itself. They are likewise restricted from procuring such needed evidence such as proof of marriage, divorce, birth, and/or affidavits in support of the claim. The veteran must furnish all required evidence. State Service Offices provide professional assistance in obtaining required documentation and well as advise, council and assist in preparing complete applications for V.A. benefits. V.A. benefits are not automatic, they must be applied for according to laws rules and regulations".

Jim then briefed the Board on his testimony for HB 404 and gave them an insight on what could be expected at the hearing.

In conclusion Jim talked about the performance appraisals for the Division and also passed out a draft of the Administrator's appraisal that the Board could review and be prepared to complete at the end of May which is the end of the Jim's probationary period.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 P.M. The next meeting will be called at the pleasure of the Chairman in either June or July.


RUBEN MCKINNEY, Chairman


BERNADETTE OPP, Secretary

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA



MARC RACICOT
GOVERNOR

STATE CAPITOL
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0801

June 10, 1993

The Honorable Mike Cooney
Secretary of State
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Secretary Cooney:

Please be informed that effective May 18, 1993, I have reappointed the following individual to the Board of Veterans' Affairs, in accordance with Montana Code Annotated 2-15-1205, under the Department of Military Affairs:

Ms. Bernadette A. Opp, P.O. Box 1516, Belgrade, MT, 59714 is to serve a term ending May 18, 1998 and fulfills the qualifications for being a member.

If you have questions regarding this appointment, please call Pat Lopach, Appointments Coordinator, at extension 5516.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Marc Racicot", is written over the printed name.

MARC RACICOT
Governor

cc: John Prendergast
Jim Jacobsen
Marie Hinman



A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was held in Great Falls, Montana on June 28, 1993 with the following members and guests present:

Ruben McKinney, Chairman	Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Tot Mayer, Vice Chairman	Ruddy Reilly, Sen. Service Officer
Bernadette Opp, Secretary	Marie Hinman, Sen. Program Ass't
Neil Shepherd, Member	Ron Davis, Guest
George Hagemen, Member	

Chairman McKinney called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ron Davis, who was a guest at the meeting, introduced himself and said he is the immediate past Commander of the Disabled American Veterans and the current Department Adjutant of the same organization.

A motion was made by Neil Shepherd and seconded by Bernie Opp that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. The motion carried.

The next item on the agenda was the election of officers for the coming year. Chairman McKinney opened the discussion indicating that it has been brought to his attention that the custom by which the officers were elected conceivably could be changed. A discussion ensued with the conclusion being, instead of accepting the Chairmanship the third year on the Board that it would be more beneficial to be a member for a least three years before assuming that office. George Hageman made a motion to this effect with the provision that all members retain their current office for the following year, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried.

Jim Jacobsen, Administrator, advised the Board that the Governor has officially appointed 15 individuals from various service organizations to serve on the Cemetery Advisory Council. These same organizations have also provided us with names of those that will serve as alternates. He has met with these members and discussions involved their organization, construction updates, and plans for the future projects. They will be meeting about every other month.

Jim passed out fact sheets that pertained to the State Veterans Cemetery. The first page outlined major events that have occurred at the Cemetery from 1985 to the present. This included how many persons are buried at the Cemetery, year by year, with a running total to date. Chairman McKinney asked about the military formalities at the Cemetery. Jim answered that the Lewis

and Clark Veterans Council, which is comprised of V.F.W., American Legion and D.A.V. members, provides the military honors, and added that they do an outstanding job. The second page contained information relating to the current fee for opening and closing the gravesites. Attached to the sheet were the current State of Montana Administrative Rules for the Cemetery. The last page of the rules addresses the setting of fees i.e., "the fees may be set by the Board of Veterans Affairs at its first annual meeting of each calendar year". This has not been done. Jim said that currently the Federal Department Veterans Affairs provides \$150.00 for eligible veterans and would recommend approval of an extension of this fee and not make any changes. Bernie Opp made a motion to this effect, Neil Shepherd seconded the motion and it was carried. The next page lists the construction and what is being planned, and the last sheet defines the proceeds from veteran license plates sales, donations, and plot allowance. Ruben questioned if the monetary figure was for new plates, renewals, or both. Jim answered that the figure was for both but he is working with the State Treasurer's office to separate these categories and beginning on the first of August a system should be instituted.

Jim went on to talk about the fee (\$150.00) for opening and closing of the gravesites. For eligible veterans the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs pays this amount. Up to this point in time we have contracted this service from a local excavator. The contract calls for opening several gravesite at one time and back-filling them individually as the need arises. This contract will expire June 30th. Jim feels that the appearance of open graves is very unsightly and also unsafe. Taking everything into consideration, Jim came to the conclusion that the fee for opening and closing gravesites could be used to purchase equipment so we could dig and back-fill our own graves. He put his idea into motion and consequently is expecting the arrival of this equipment in the next few weeks. We have three payments of approximately \$6,000.00 each year for the next three years. Wayne Carlson (Cemetery Sexton) is experienced in operating heavy equipment and will be able to not only use this tractor for graves but also other projects at the Cemetery. We also are looking into the possibility of purchasing a frost remover to thaw the ground in the winter time. The cost estimate is \$600.00.

Jim also reported that the lettering and service plaques have been installed on the Wall at the Cemetery and look outstanding. Also, the plans for the Air Guard's volunteer labor for this summer are in progress. They will be building roads and working on the sprinkler system. We have also modified the original plan

to change the road to the East to make it coincide with the West side road. The National Guard Thrift Shop has donated \$2,500.00 to the Cemetery, and with money donated by the Cemetery Advisory Council, we will purchase a lowering device and the auxiliary equipment to go with it. We are waiting however, until the storage building is in place so we have a place for storage. We also have had some Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts doing volunteer work at the Cemetery and they have been a big help to Wayne. Jim said he had contacted the Rocky Mountain Development Council as they have a program for summer employment for youths of low income families, and is waiting to hear from them. He also recapitulated the events of Memorial Day and due to the good turnout and success of the day will be making this an annual event to be held on the traditional Memorial Day (May 30th).

On the Public Relations program, the 103rd Public Affairs Detachment has put together video tape for T.V. and audio tapes for radio, advertizing the sale of the license plates for the Cemetery. Jim will be getting these out statewide to any and all stations that will carry them. He also sends articles to the V.F.W. and the American Legion newspapers to advertize the sale of license plates. In addition, he is putting together a poster that will have a pocket for pre-addressed envelopes to send donations to the Cemetery.

The last item pertaining to the Cemetery involved a directory that Jim would like to have at the entrance of the Cemetery. This directory would allow folks to find specific graves. As the cemetery grows this will be even more essential. This will be included in future plans. Jim praised Wayne for the outstanding job he has done at the cemetery. Ruddy also remarked, that in his travels around the State for the American Legion, he passes out posters about the license plates and encourages veterans to buy them.

Doug Booker and Karen Revious from Centralized Service then joined the meeting to participate in the budget discussions. Jim handed out facts and figures pertaining to General Funds monies for the remainder of this fiscal year. He explained that page one includes specific expenditure categories and an estimate of the balance in our budget as of the end of June.

Page two comprises of money expended by each office. The figures are accurate and taken off the automated system however are a little misleading as some purchases charged to the Helena office are actually for field offices.

Page three gives personnel data including grade, date of hire, hourly rate, benefits and position totals.

Page four shows equipment and supplies that have been purchased in the last few months. We are in the process of getting this distributed to each respective office. Jim feels more equipment is needed and will continue to work on making it happen.

The last two pages details budget figures for FY 94/95. The front page is a combination of general fund and cemetery money. The second page separates these totals. Jim pointed out that there are minus figures in personal services and that is because the Legislature required every agency to come up with a 5% reduction. The Department covered a part of this but our contribution for this year is \$18,300 and for next year its \$17,923. Jim went on to say that there is money set aside is what is called a contingency fund. This is for small agencies that don't have means to refund any money. He has applied to this fund and the results are back. When the final division for the Department has been adjudicated he feels we will come close to covering our costs. He had also asked for monies to cover the cost of Marie's retirement but that was denied.

Jim invited Doug Booker to address the group. Doug explained the way the Department applied the 5% vacancy savings factor was by taking the ratio of what each Program had in general fund and then deducting across the board amounts. Doug also alluded to the contingency fund Jim had talked about and the end results amounted to 4% of the 5%. He does feel that if the Legislature meets for a special session the contingency fund will be withdrawn and suggested that we make plans to operate without this fund. We could be looking at major cuts if the special session comes to be. General Prendergast is encouraging Program Managers to look at the impact of a 10 to 25 percent reduction, and how it would be executed. (This is for in-house use only.) The whole Department will be weighed as a group and more money could be taken from one Division than another. Jim said he has come up with a draft plan that he will address in detail during the executive session. A discussion followed concerning funding for the entire State Government, and suppositions on what the final impact would be. Jim thanked Doug and Karen for coming and praised Karen for her outstanding support since he assumed the Administrator's position.

The next item on the Agenda is the annual training session. Jim asked for Board approval to hold the sessions on the 27th, 28th and 29th of October at the Gallatin Gateway Inn which is close to

Bozeman. He also recommended that the next Board meeting be held in conjunction, so that any Board members who wished to sit in on the entire session could do so. Jim detailed the tentative agenda and feels that it will be most productive. Neil Shepherd made a motion to have the training session and Board meeting at the Gallatin Gateway Inn on the above dates, Tot Mayer seconded the motion and it was carried.

Jim then gave his Administrators report. He handed out a report which demonstrated Division statistics as of the 31st of May. This report exhibited each office with data in the following categories: (1) the number of veterans served in their area of responsibility (2) miles traveled to serve these veterans outside the County in which our office is located, (3) percent of veterans the Service Officer travels to take care of (4) transmittals prepared/submitted to V.A. (5) and the monetary amounts the Division assisted these individuals to obtain from the V.A. Jim answered questions concerning the above and added that he feels this could be used as a "tool" if we are faced with having to close offices or reduce personnel.

He also related that he has been in constant contact with Robert Anderson from the Department of Institutions concerning the veterans nursing home in Glendive and feels the progress in going well.

He advised that he will be attending the American Legion Convention and combining it with a trip to Billings to deliver office furniture. He is also considering the possibility of requesting authority from the Board to attend the convention of the National Association of Directors of Veterans Affairs. It will be held in Bismark, North Dakota on the 13th through the 15th of September. He feels it would be an excellent opportunity to meet with his counterparts from other States and believes he would be valuable to see how other States run their operations. He has checked into the costs of flying but may consider the possibility of driving. The Board gave their endorsement.

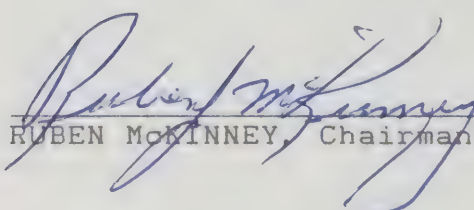
The American Legion has placed a FAX machine in our office at Fort Harrison. They paid the initial costs and the Division is paying the monthly charges. The number is 442-9627.

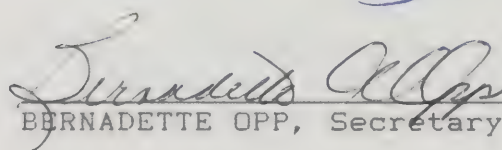
Before the meeting adjourned, Chairman McKinney asked Ron Davis if he would like to address the group. Ron reported that due to the size of Montana he is grateful for our field offices so veterans have a place to go for help. The members of the D.A.V.

count of our offices for help and offered the assistance of the D.A.V. should we need it. He also said he appreciated being invited to the meeting.

The meeting recessed for lunch and reconvened for an executive session at 1:00 P.M. The purpose of this session was to review options, in the event a R.I.F. becomes necessary.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 P.M.


RUBEN MCMINNEY, Chairman


BERNADETTE OPP, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Ruben McKinney on October 28, 1993 at 8:00 A.M., at the Gallatin Gateway Inn with the following individuals present:

Tot Mayer, Vice Chairman
Bernie Opp, Secretary
George Hageman, Member
Neil Shepherd, Member

Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Ruddy Reilly, Sen. Ser Officer
Marie Hinman, Sen. Prog Assist
All Division Employees

Chairman McKinney opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there.

Neil Shepherd made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

The workshop feedback was the next item on the agenda. Jim Jacobsen reviewed the schedule of events that the employees had participated in up to this point in time. Beginning on Wednesday, the 26th of October, the employees got together for a workshop on job descriptions, performance appraisals, service office operations, monthly reports, and filing systems. Ruddy took the Service Officers and Marie got together with the Program Assistants and they discussed these topics. A spokesman for each of these groups shared with the Board about what they came up with on these various categories.

JOB DESCRIPTION

The goal of the job description workshop was for upgrading the employees pay scales. Ultimately the newly hired employee would be on a training period at a lower grade and eventually would move up as time and performance appraisal comes into play.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The next topic was the performance appraisal work shop to determine what the employees duties are. The old format was used and everyone had their own input on the revision. These new revisions will be used for the scheduled January 1994 appraisal period.

SERVICE OFFICE OPERATIONS

The groups discussed the daily, weekly, monthly and yearly operations of their particular office.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Discussion on the monthly reports was to add other Agencies such as SRS, Social Security and Job Service.

FILING SYSTEMS

Discussions on the filing system centered around the practices and procedures of each office. Some of the questions were: Do they take these files on the road? What do you do when someone calls or writes and wants their file? What do you do with the files of deceased veterans? How do you purge the files. Ruddy elaborated on the importance of purging files.

Jim thanked Bernie for her hospitality and opening up her home for an informal after hours get together.

Thursday morning opened with a two hour presentation on the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. The presentation included a talk about the operations and functions of the Records Center followed by a slide show, and concluded with a question and answer period. The 2nd half of the morning included presentations by VA employees such as Wayne Hill and the Rating Board, Diana Kruger on Computer Screens, and Nyle Bland on Home Loans. Thursday afternoon lectures were from Mike Thompson, Legal Issues and Don Polly, Medical Center, briefing everyone on Clinton's Health Care Plan and how this will affect the VA. Bottom line is the VA system will play a major role in the Health Care System. What kind of an impact this will have is yet to be determined. More talks were given by Evan Lewis on Stress/Grief and Robert Turgeon on Voc Re-Hab. Ruddy gave a talk on hearings and appeals and Marie wrapped up the day talking about Personnel and Administrative dealings. Each person was given a packet of information and handouts. Jim explained to everyone about the briefing he uses for anyone that wants to know about Veterans Affairs. It was updated as of the end of the fiscal year particularly in terms of the amount of money we bring in. Jim will update this semi annually. Jim talked about the service offices check list, broken down into office, technical and personnel management. Each office has a file on this. As with the statistical breakdown there is also a fact sheet about the Cemetery to include the rules along with a copy of the people, by name, who are on the advisory council, copy of all our fax numbers and the Health Care plan.

Lee Barta gave a talk on the Veterans Home in Columbia Falls. Lee video taped an interview with Superintendent, Pat Estensen. The Veterans Home is an institution that Lee visits frequently. Along with video taping of the Superintendents comments, Lee was able to give everyone a visual view of the home both inside and outside. Mr. Estensen explained that the home was about 100 years old. Proposals from different cities in Montana were solicited for the placement of the home. This took place in 1895 and Columbia Falls was the designated location. The original facility was primarily for Civil War and Indian War veterans. Currently the facility has a 90 bed nursing unit and a 60 bed domiciliary care unit. The home is available to honorably discharged veterans and their spouses who are residents of Montana.

Jim shared with the group that he had the honor of riding on the plane with the Governor and a group of his people on the 15th of October to Glendive where they had the ground breaking ceremony for the new Veterans Nursing Home. There were about 1,500 people in attendance. Jim said the Governor was extremely impressed. The projection is to complete the construction by December of 1994 and have it occupied by January of 1995. Jim is serving on a vendor selection committee reviewing the bids to ensure they meet all the requirements. Veterans are concerned about the fact that the facility will be contracted out because they feel that the Columbia Falls facility is a wonderful facility run by State employees. Jim explained that the contract will run for 2 1/2 years, the 1/2 year being part of the fiscal year. The home will have an 80 bed, 2 wing nursing home with an Alzheimer's wing.

Jim then discussed the Cemetery Advisory Committee. The Committee meets every other month and there are 15 different organizations that are represented. There is no general fund money going into the cemetery so all construction, maintenance, operation and administration of the cemetery is done strictly with the funds from donations, license plates sales and plot allowances. On construction update, we rerouted a road with the help of the National Guard and now we are improving the water system and within 2 or 3 years from now we will have had extended the sprinkling system, leveled and seeded the area making it ready for burials and then beginning the same process in another area of the cemetery. The construction of the maintenance and storage building will hopefully begin soon. We are about ready to buy Wayne a lowering device and also a grave frost remover. This should all come to about \$5,000. The Thrift Shop from Ft. Harrison is going to give \$2,500. The committee that has supported the cemetery is going to give \$1,800. Between \$750.00 and \$800.00 will also be donated to the cemetery from the Bike-a-thon put on by a joint effort from the VA and the National Guard. Jim is projecting about \$70,000 worth of license plate sales this year. We are now seeing the \$10.00 donation coming around. We have about six or seven thousand veterans who have

purchased plates and there are 93 thousand veterans who have not

purchased plates. Jim demonstrated the new license plate posters to be distributed throughout Montana. The offices are asked to distribute them to local Courthouses, Funeral Homes, VFW clubs, American Legion, etc. A Montana National Guard unit put together, free of charge, tapes for TV purposes to advertise the veterans license plates. Jim showed everyone the commercials.

Jim gave a brief talk about his trip to North Dakota for the National Directors of Veterans Affairs Convention.

Jim advised the Board that he had been invited to speak at the VA Health Care Fair, the Military Affairs Committee and the Helena Chamber of Commerce. The 163rd Brigade, a guard unit that was activated during the WWII, had a reunion this year and he also addressed this group about the Veterans Cemetery. With Veterans Day coming up, Jim will be involved with proclamations from the Governor.

House Joint Resolution 27 which was passed in the last session directed that a study be performed by a legislative committee to look at Nursing home care. The end goal being potential legislation for the 95 session. He gave a presentation on what Veterans Affairs is all about. The committee will meet every other month until January, 1995 and Jim will be working with this committee. Jim took the input that he received from the field employees to the committee which were: The need for more nursing homes and cemeteries on a geographical basis, the potential of having a new home loan program separate from the VA system, a homeless veterans program, and lastly the potential of a Desert Storm bonus. Representatives from the various service organizations who attended the meeting also expressed their support and/or concerns on the various topics. Committees for the Special Session are scheduled to meet the week before Thanksgiving on the 17th, 18th, and 19th of November. Jim is scheduled to brief our subcommittee on the 18th. To our knowledge they are only going to look at the reductions recommended by the Governor which does not include our Division, but Jim is prepared to let them know what any cuts would do to the Division if their ideas should change.

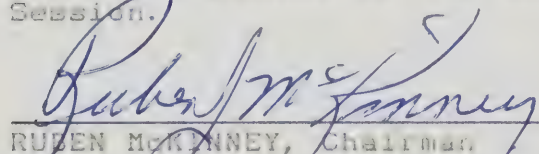
Turning to the Administrative Report, Jim explained that General Prendergast along with Mr. Doug Booker could not attend the

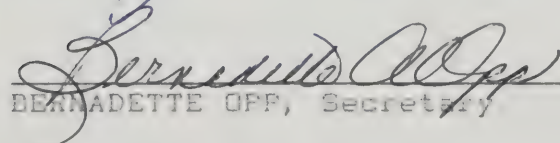
training and they expressed their appreciation for being invited. Concerning the 93/94/95 budget report, Jim is recommending that we stop travel for one month as we did last year. The service offices will let Jim know which month they choose not to travel. As we get closer to the end of the fiscal year we may have to cancel another month. Jim explained to the group that the communication expenses are high. It is costing the Division around \$600.00 just to have the phones sitting on the desks. Jim cautioned everyone to have good judgement when using the phones. Money saved could buy books, typewriter, file cabinets, book

cases, etc. Last year we closed out the year with \$29.45. So far this year we are progressing well. Jim has moved monies within the budget using last year as a guide line and he feels confident that we will make it in fine shape. We do have some challenges with Marie's retirement and Bozeman's Service Officer payout. We do have some flexibility with the Missoula's Program Assistant position. Bernie asked Jim about the contingency fund. He explained that the contingency fund is there and our request has been approved, however, before the money is distributed, the Department is waiting until after the Special Session of the Legislature. Jim said our share of the contingency money will probably equal Marie's retirement buy out.

Employees were given special recognition in the form of a longevity certificate for those who have served five years or more. These certificates are signed by the Governor, the General, the Chairman and the Administrator.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 A.M. The next meeting has been left open because of the possibility of meeting after the Special Session.


 RUBEN MCKINNEY, Chairman


 BERNADETTE OPP, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Ruben McKinney on March 28, 1994 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Ruben McKinney, Chairman
 Tot Mayer, Vice Chairman
 Bernie Opp, Secretary
 George Hageman, Member
 Neil Shepherd, Member

Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Ruddy Reilly, Sen. Ser. Officer
 Lee Ann Welch, Sen. Prog. Asst.
 MG Prendergast
 LTC Ray Reed

Chairman McKinney opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there.

Neil Shepherd made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

Jim began the meeting with his presentation of the 75th Birthday Ceremony to take place in the Rotunda and at all the field offices. Jim talked about the packet that was sent up to the Governor which included the Governor's proclamation, Governor's speech and MVAD information packet. Jim and the Board members will have an office call with the Governor and then continue out to the Rotunda for the Ceremony. A vendor has been chosen for the Veterans Home in Glendive. The Governor will announce the news at the end of the ceremony.

General Prendergast wanted to let the Board know that Jim and his staff are doing a wonderful job. The General feels that the Veterans Affairs is a team player in the Department of Military Affairs. The General talked about some of the bills that will be going before the Legislature such as the Military leave bill which is in danger of being cut. Numerous veterans organizations have gone before the legislature in support of veterans. As far as the Budget went the General is pleased with the Division. We were not hit with any Budget cuts. The General had nothing but praise for the State Veterans Cemetery. The National Guard and the Veterans Administration sponsored a bike ride and raised \$1600.00 for the Veterans Cemetery. This year the General reports the fund raiser will be bigger and better with more bike races along with a 5K run and a one mile walk. The General talked about the work that's being done with the Indian Reservations through the Department of Military Affairs on Emergency & Medical training. There was also talk about the many veterans on the Reservations and their desires to have their own veterans groups.

Jim briefed everyone on the budget. He talked about the balances from previous years and the current balance as of this date. Jim feels comfortable with where we stand right now. Next month after the state report comes in, he will be doing an extensive audit to see how we will finish out at the end of the fiscal year. All the offices have provided us with their expected expenditures for April, May and June. We have had some savings with the vacancy in Butte and the part-time position in Missoula. With this we were able to buy some needed reference material. After viewing the budget, Jim will decide if there will be another Board meeting in this fiscal year. Ruben commented that at the next meeting there will be a new election of officers.

Within the next 2 or 3 weeks, the process begins with input for the new budget for 96 & 97 starting with Jim then to Doug Booker then to the Governor's budget office for their approval of our requests. Jim is getting together a priority list starting with upgrading the positions. Jim has rewritten all the job descriptions in the Division.

Travel was the next priority to be discussed. We will be doing some research on either cutting back or adding to the travel days to service the veteran the best way possible. We are hoping to have enough money in travel so we can bring in an expert in Veterans benefits for our annual training session in October and also have enough so we don't have to cut travel for a month like we've had to do in the past. Along these same lines Ruddy talked about getting quality training for the Service Officers. Plans are under way to have Wales, Lee, Russ and Cheryl go to the National Veterans Legal Services Project Training for a week at the American University in Washington D.C. in June. Ruddy is gathering funds from various veterans service organizations to cover the expense.

The communications budget is borderline. The field offices are aware of the heavy cost in communication and are doing a good job not overusing the phones.

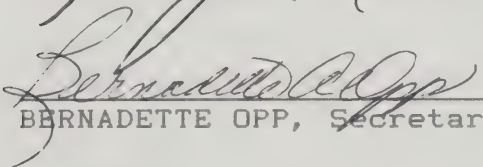
We didn't get budgeted for the Butte or Bozeman rent so we have had to take that out of our General Fund.

Next on the Agenda was a cemetery update. Jim announced that Wayne received an upgrade in his position. We are also in the process of hiring a part-time groundskeeper to help Wayne with the upkeep of the cemetery. The bid has been opened for the Construction of the Maintenance Building and a local contractor from Helena has been chosen. With donation money we purchased a lowering device and thawing equipment. A state seal was also purchased for the Wall to be hung below the Military seals. In February we received a donation of \$5,000.00 wherein we decided to have a directory sign built. Other future plans for the Cemetery along with the Maintenance Building will include a pond, paving and extension of the irrigation systems. Proposed purchases depending upon donation monies would include a trailer for the tractor, dump truck and a cellular phone.

Jim's administrative report talked about the costs to run each office, performance appraisals which are done and filed in the employee's personnel file, the Glendive Nursing home completion date and the chosen vendor. Jim talked about his participation with the Montana Health Care Authority and Regional Boards. Jim talked to Joe Underkolfer about giving a presentation at one of the State meetings held here. Jim wants to make sure that the veterans are heard when they make their decision. Jim is continuing to work with the House Joint Resolution 27 Sub Committee, which is a sub committee that is looking at Veterans issues. Some of the issues include more veterans Nursing Homes, raising the County Burial monies, bonuses for Desert Storm/Shield soldiers as well as going back to Grenada and Panama, homeless programs for veterans in the State of Montana and Home loan programs. Jim will be attending and speaking at the DAV convention in Havre in May, VFW Convention in June in Billings and the American Legion Convention in Missoula in July. The next State Veterans Administrator Convention is in September in New Mexico. Jim hasn't decided yet if it would be worthwhile to go. Jim will get back to the Board on his decision. The next training session is tentatively scheduled for October, 1994 in Helena.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting has been left open due to budget restriction.


RUBEN MCKINNEY, Chairman


BERNADETTE OPP, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Ruben McKinney on July 28, 1994 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Ruben McKinney, Chairman
Tot Mayer, Vice Chairman
Bernie Opp, Secretary
George Hageman, Member

Johnny Buck, Member
Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Ruddy Reilly, Sen. Ser. Officer
Lee Ann Welch, Sen. Prog. Asst.

Chairman McKinney opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there.

Johnny Buck, our newest Board member, was introduced. Johnny is a WWII veteran from Glendive. Johnny talked about the construction and opening date of the new Eastern Montana Veterans Home. Frank Kruse was also introduced as a member of the Vietnam Veterans group from Billings.

Bernie Opp made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Tot Mayer seconded the motion and it was carried.

Next order of business was election of officers. Ruben suggested that a motion be made that all officers progress to the next position. It was moved and seconded that Tot Mayer be moved to the Chairman position, George Hageman-Vice Chairman, Ruben McKinney-Secretary.

The area of responsibility map was redesignated for the Board members. After this was finalized, there was ample discussion about the importance of our veteran service officers servicing their designated area and getting the word out about when they will be in certain areas. Jim talked about the positive and negative feedback that does come up as a result of service by our service officers. Jim has asked the Board that when they do travel around their areas if they hear anything that could benefit the veteran to please let him know so that he can followup, investigate and take care of the situation.

The new Job Descriptions and Position Requirements were next on the agenda. A draft of each of these were sent out to the offices for their comments. Secretary Opp was concerned about the Board not having any approval of the finalization. Jim assured her that there will be space for the Boards approval. Jim discussed the importance of upgrades for the service officers and program assistants and then talked about the employee feedback. There will be a second draft and then more discussions at the annual training session with the Board and the employees. Ruddy added about the importance of accredited training for the service officers.

There is a possibility that during the next legislative session we are going to be placed under a different sub-committee for our budget. We may be placed in the Corrections and Human Services subcommittee. Jim went over the year end budget to show where we were short in some categories and over in others. We balanced out pretty close without having to cut travel. FY95 should be a mirror image of FY94. As far as FY96 & FY97 are concerned, Jim explained to the Board that he has gone in and asked for more money in supplies, equipment and travel etc. and more spending authority for the cemetery budget in donations, license plates and plot allowance.

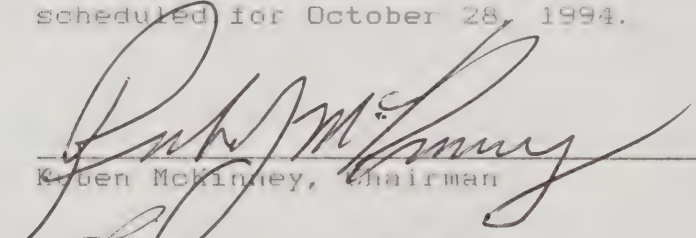
The cemetery maintenance building is now being built. The Air National Guard came in and extended the road system, put in some disability ramps, new set of stairs, hauled dirt and cleared away weeds at the cemetery. The state seal plaque has been placed on the cemetery wall. A new groundskeeper has been hired at the cemetery. The Buffalo Stampede bike ride will take place September 17, 1994. Participants can ride, walk or run. Proceeds will go to the cemetery. Memorial Day was a big success this year with four times as many people as last year. The directory sign was finished in time for the ceremony.

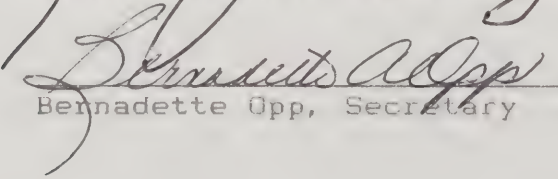
Jim gave the Vietnam Veterans of American a heartfelt thanks for their support in sending our service officers for a week of training and also donating funds for our future training session.

Jim talked about the new fee for setting the headstones. The price is now \$70.00 instead of \$30.00. Also, another issue that's come up is another war bonus. The challenge with these two is where will the money come from and who will be in charge of these new programs. Jim will be attending a special legislative subcommittee meeting in September to find the answers to these questions.

The Board approved Jim's trip to New Mexico for the Veterans Affairs Administrators Convention in September.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for October 28, 1994.


Robin McKinney, Chairman


Bernadette Opp, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Tot Mayer on October 28, 1994 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Tot Mayer, Chairman	Johnny Buck, Member
George Hageman, Vice Chairman	Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Ruben McKinney, Secretary	Ruddy Reilly, Sen. Ser. Officer
Bernie Opp, Member	Lee Ann Welch, Sen. Prog. Asst.

Chairman Mayer opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there.

Jim introduced 3 of our newest employees. Introduced were Russ McKenna, Service Officer from Bozeman, Melanie Tobiness, Program Assistant from Butte and Patricia Crowley, Service Office from Helena.

Bernie Opp made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Tot Mayer seconded the motion and it was carried.

Jim talked about the training session. This year the training session was one day longer than past sessions. The conference began on Tuesday at Ft. Harrison with opening remarks from Jim, Ruddy and Lee Ann. Next on the Agenda was to break up into groups to discuss the new job descriptions, position requirements, overall office duties and difficult clients. The afternoon was spent touring the VA with host Jeff Alger and then we had a series of presentations by VA personnel. The afternoon ended with a tour of the Veterans Cemetery.

Wednesday and Thursday were spent at Jorgenson's in a conference room with lecturer Ron Abrams. Ten attorney's, 15 veteran service officers and MVAD employees were present. Ron Abrams is co-founder of the National Veterans Legal Service Project, a nation wide organization. This organization trains service officers and veterans representatives.

The budget comparison report for past years was reviewed. The report for FY95 was a quarter of the way through and we seem to be right on target. Jim will be going before the Legislature to request more spending authority for the cemetery in plot allowance, donations and license plates.

The auditors were here this year for their 2 year audit. There were 2 areas of impact on Veterans Affairs. One was in the area of donations. The auditors were seeing donation checks that were dated long before deposits were made. The second one was mileage on travel claims. If you use your own personal car when a state car is available, then you can only claim 25 cents per mile instead of 28 cents per mile.

The budget for 96 and 97 has been blessed by the Governor. We are asking for upgrades in our budget for training and travel.

Doug Booker talked about the general fund budget and said everything looked good on the budget proposals. We will be going to the Legislature with a good package but we do need to be realistic as we may have to prioritize. We will need the Boards help at the session to push the budget.

Jim thanked Frank Graham for his help in writing the Position Descriptions and Progressive Requirements. Frank rewrote 6 position descriptions. Three for the Service Officers to include Grades 10, 11 and 12 and three for the Program Assistants to include Grades 9, 10 and 11. The Program Assistants title will be changed to Veteran Technicians. The progressive requirements will consist of testing (oral and written), performance appraisals and training.

Next was the cemetery report and Jim mentioned that the cemetery building was finally up. There were some problems with the Montana Power putting their lines in which caused a delay. We still have some plumbing and carpentry work left. All in all the building should be occupied by the first of December. For FY 95 construction, we are in the process of drawing up the plans for the center circle, paving, more wells and sprinkler systems. It was decided to do away with a pond at the cemetery because of too many liabilities. There was much discussion about the donation envelopes as to where they are being placed and are they being used. A question was raised about putting the envelopes in the veterans service organizations newsletters. Jim will check and see if this is possible. Row markers have been purchased for the cemetery. License plate sales continue to move up every month.

Jim reviewed the briefing charts with everyone and encouraged them to provide any changes necessary to keep it updated. Included in the folders were pamphlets for the new Veterans Home in Glendive. Construction of the new home should be completed by January, 1995. Jim said they need at least 37 applicants before they can open the doors to the 80 bed facility.

House Joint Resolution 27 Sub Committee has been meeting regularly to discuss the headstone issue. They are also going to propose a bonus for Grenada, Panama, Lebanon and Desert Storm.

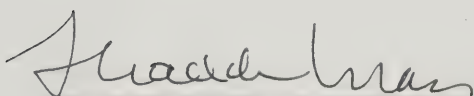
Jim discussed the future of automation. Ruddy's office at Ft. Harrison has already been wired. Jim will be doing some research on the capability of getting tapped into the files at the VA and also seeing if the State can give us a hand. We are updating our reference books and pamphlets.

The President of the United States is going to hold a White House Conference on Aging in May of 1995. Each state is given a certain number of delegates. Jim is on the Governor's committee for the conference in Washington. The committee feels that someone should go to represent the aging veteran.

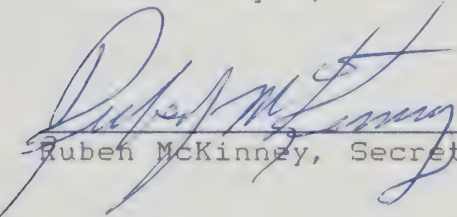
As approved by the Board at the last meeting, Jim attended the National Association of State Directors in New Mexico. Forty states were represented.

Employees with 5 and 10 years in with the State were recognized. Those recognized were; Valerie Martin, 10 years, Len Leibinger, 10 years and Lee Ann Welch, 5 years. Len was also congratulated for being employee of the year for the Department of Military.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for January 12, 1995.



Thaddeus Mayer, Chairman



Ruben McKinney, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Tot Mayer on February 8, 1995 at 1:30 p.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Tot Mayer, Chairman	Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Ruben McKinney, Secretary	Ruddy Reilly, Sen. Ser. Officer
Bernie Opp, Member	Lee Ann Welch, Sen. Prog. Asst.
Johnny Buck, Member	Bill Comp, DAV

Chairman Mayer opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. George Hageman was unable to attend the meeting.

Johnny Buck made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Bernie Opp seconded the motion and it was carried.

Jim briefed the Board on the meeting to take place at the Capital on the Budget Hearing. Each program director will speak on their budget. We will be asking for more spending authority in license plates, plot and donation accounts along with a part-time cemetery groundskeeper for the Cemetery. We will also be asking for more money for equipment and training. Jim also introduced three new proposals. They were new office equipment, a part-time cemetery groundskeeper, and the Governor's vacancy savings. He then backtracked to speak about increased travel costs and compared it to past years travel costs. All the bills concerning veterans issues being brought before the Legislature were discussed.

Position Descriptions and Progressive Requirements have been signed by the Personnel Officer and Jim and will also need to be signed by the Board Chairman. Jim explained to everyone the importance of being able to move up the career ladder. Applicable employees will be tested and required to attend training sessions in order to be promoted. All Position Descriptions have been rewritten with the exception of Jim, Ruddy and Lee Ann's. Program Assistant's are now Veteran Service Technicians.

The 2 year term is up for the Cemetery Advisory Council Committee. Jim has sent letters out to the various service organizations to renominate a primary and alternate candidates for the next 2 years. The Board authorized Jim to waive the \$150.00 plot allowance for indigent veterans who are buried in the State Veterans Cemetery. Jim is still working on getting highway signs erected for the Veterans Cemetery. Tot discussed the details about getting the cemetery at Fort Missoula. The property is owned by the school district and he has a meeting with them in the near future to discuss the possibility of purchasing an additional 6 acres.

Jim's name was recommended to the Governor and approved to attend the White House Conference on Aging Conference in Washington, DC on May 2, 1995 to represent the aging veteran. Jim is also working with the office on aging on a Insurance Counseling Assistance Program. There are 100 senior citizens volunteering to provide counseling for the aging on insurance, medicare, medicaid, etc. The Office on Aging is going to put on 10 statewide training sessions for these 100 volunteers. Our service officers will be attending these sessions and will give a briefing about Montana Veterans Affairs Division.

Currently, Polly LaTray from the Federal Job Service along with Veterans Affairs and the National Guard are putting together a pamphlet explaining all the entitled benefits per each department.

Through the VA, we will now be able to pull up the information screen on veterans. The plan is to equip all the offices with computers, printers, modems and software which will enable us to better serve the veteran. We will also be linked into the State Bulletin Board System.

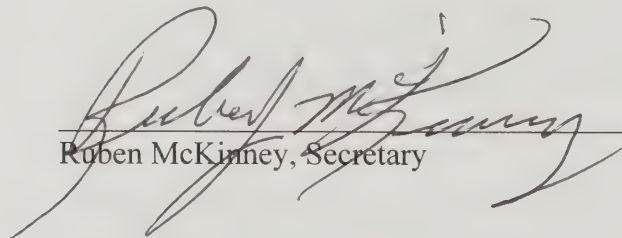
We are already gearing up for the next annual training session to be held in October. Rodney and Cheryl will be attending the annual VVA training session in June. Ruddy will be looking into using the VVA experts at the next session. Another option for training would be to bring in Dave Addlestone who is with the National Veterans Legal Service Project expert in discharge corrections.

Johnny Buck toured the Eastern Montana Veterans Home in Glendive. Completion of the home should be by the end of February. There are only nine qualified applicants on the waiting list at this time. The home is requiring 37 applicants before they can open the door.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for July 20, 1995.



Thaddeus Mayer, Chairman



Ruben McKinney, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Tot Mayer on July 20, 1995 at 8:00 a.m. in Glendive, Montana. The Board meeting is being held in Glendive in conjunction with the opening of the Eastern Montana Veterans Home. The following individuals were present:

Tot Mayer, Chairman
 Ruben McKinney, Secretary
 Johnny Buck, Member
 George Hageman, Member

Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Lee Ann Welch, Sen. Prog. Asst.
 Rodney Boyer, Service Officer

Chairman Mayer opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. Bernadette Opp was unable to attend the meeting.

Tot Mayer made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. George Hageman seconded the motion and it was carried.

George Hageman has been elected Chairman of the Board for the next year.

Jim discussed with the Board the year end budget projections. As of today the final year end budget report was not in yet but we are projecting about \$600.00 over and above. Jim explained the comparison report from 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995. This report comes right off the actual budget report. This report breaks down the financial cost for each office. From this report we can see what it costs to run each office. Next report reviewed was the 1996/1997 budget. This report is a combination of the General and Cemetery fund.

The new Position Progressive Requirement program was discussed. This program was implemented to the pay scale for MVAD employees which will give employees a chance to upgrade their pay scale upon meeting certain requirements. In order to be upgraded, the employee must take a written and oral test along with time on the job and above standard job appraisals.

The legislative report was reviewed. This report showed various veterans issues (bills) that were either passed or denied.

A new part-time cemetery groundskeeper was hired to help out Wayne during the busy summer months. A new John Deere mower with mulcher was purchased this summer. Also purchased were air compressor, numerous tools and a sprayer. Eventually we will purchase a front mower. The Montana National Air Guard pored a cement pad for Wayne to put his shed on. A new highway sign on the way to Fort Harrison was put in place to also announce the Montana State Veterans Cemetery. Jim is still working on getting signs on Highway 15 since this is the Veterans Highway and have the cemetery listed on the Montana map. Curbing and paving of the center circle is the project for July. The next project will be adding more sprinklers and 2 more wells.

Jim read a letter from the Mayor of Miles City indicating they want to donate 100 acres of land for a future veterans cemetery. Jim has talked with various organizations encouraging them to send in proposals for a cemetery in the Eastern part of the state. Jim would like to take this information to the interim study group to propose legislation for a new cemetery. Jim also talked about the possibility of taking over the veterans cemetery in Missoula.

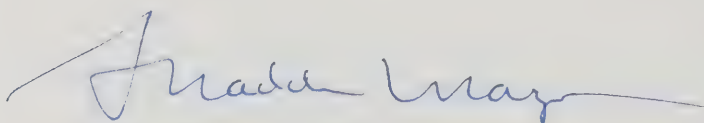
All of the service offices are now equipped with computers and we have installed a program that will let us access VA claim files. We are now able to order COVA and BVA decisions on tape.

The annual training session is scheduled for October 23rd through the 27th in Helena. We will hear presentations from the VA and other various businesses who also deal with veterans on a daily basis. One full day of training will be the expert presentations from 7 of our employees. This will be the last stage of their progressive requirements for their upgrades.

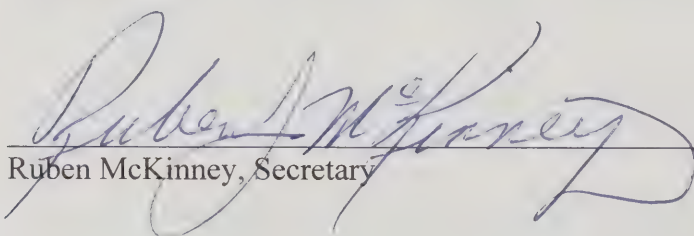
Cheryl and Rodney will be attending VVA training in Washington, D.C. The American Legion has funded training for Len in Indianapolis.

All the service officers gave a training seminar on veterans benefits to 100 volunteers who help the elderly in conjunction with the State Office on Aging. We were able to let the volunteers know who to contact when they run into a veteran needing assistance.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for October 27, 1995.



Thaddeus Mayer, Chairman



Ruben McKinney, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman George Hageman on October 27, 1995 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena at the Veterans and Pioneer's Building. The following individuals were present.

George Hageman, Chairman
 Ruben McKinney, Member
 Tot Mayer, Member
 Johnny Buck, Member
 Barbara Ellestad, Member
 Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Ruddy Reilly, Sen. Serv. Officer

Lee Ann Welch, Office Manager
 Carl Nordberg, American Legion, Adj
 Hal Manson, American Legion.
 Bill Williams, VVA
 BG Hindoen, Dept. of Military Affairs
 Doug Booker, Centralized Services
 MVAD Employees

Chairman Hageman opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. Barbara Ellestad was introduced and welcomed as the new Board member replacing Bernadette Opp.

George Hageman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Johnny Buck seconded the motion and it was carried.

First item on the agenda is the responsibility map. Jim suggested that it stay the same with Barbara taking over Bernie's area. The Board approved the motion.

General Hindoen, filling in for General Prendergast, thanked Veterans Affairs for their team work with the Department of Military Affairs. Doug Booker from Centralized Services had no comments, however, was open for questions.

Jim gave a briefing on the General Fund. The areas of expenses and all the offices are right in line with where they are suppose to be. We have enough vacancy savings to afford rent, travel and equipment. Jim also briefed everyone on the Cemetery Fund explaining the 3 categories of License Plates Sales, Donations and Plot Allowance. We paid off the tractor and we are now in the process of buying a bigger mower.

On the personnel report, Jim gave a brief description of all the positions from the Governor on down. The position progression requirements for upgrades was outlined by Jim. The Board's appointment terms were reviewed. Barbara's term will end in 1998 as she is filling Bernie's term. Ruddy and Lee Ann's positions are up for review and upgrade. Wayne and Herbie's positions were upgraded last year. This year we have 3 Veteran Service Technicians and 4 Service Officers in line for upgrades. Jim made a motion that these 7 employees be upgraded. Motion was approved and seconded.

Next on the agenda is the Cemetery Report. We are finishing up this year's project of paving the center circle, concrete curbing around the circle, finished the sprinkler system on the east and west side and drilled 2 additional wells. The next project will incorporate the requirement to extend the sprinkler system out to the maintenance building and possibly dig another well. The last project, 2 years from now, will be to continue the paving from the circle to the maintenance

building. This will complete all the construction for the cemetery. We will be purchasing a larger lawn mover and a dump truck.

At our last Board meeting the Governor offered to do some PSA's for the cemetery which has been completed. Jim sent out the PSA accompanied with a letter from the Governor to all the television station managers. The map of Montana will now include the Cemetery and Jim is working on getting highway signs up for the cemetery.

Montana Veterans Affairs is currently looking for another cemetery in the Eastern part of the state to open in 1998/1999. Announcements have been made to all the service organizations.

Jim went over the training agenda explaining the results of the 4 days to include presentations from the VA, expert presentations by the 7 upgraded employees and talks from other organizations such as Social Security, Social Rehabilitative Services, the Administrators from the 2 veterans homes and a "Safety in the Workplace" work shop.

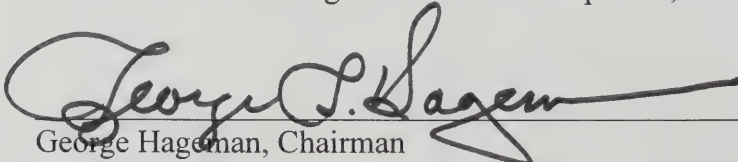
The legislative interim study group is meeting again in January. This group will be looking at veterans issues, the veterans cemetery, the veterans homes and veterans health care. This group will have all their studies completed so when the Legislature meets they are well prepared.

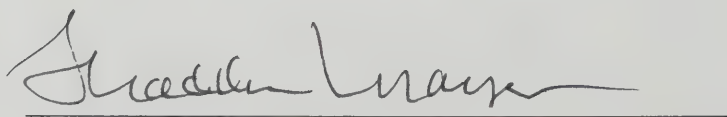
There was a discussion about privatization of the Veterans Affairs Division which Jim explained there is no company anywhere that could help veterans and their dependents and run the cemetery any cheaper than we already do.

Cheryl Heald and Rodney Boyer attended the Vietnam Veterans of America training in Washington, DC. The VVA paid for Cheryl and Veterans Affairs paid for Rodney's training. Len went to the American Legion training which was supported by the American Legion. Next year our goal is to send Art Tyler, Patricia Crowley and Valerie Martin.

Next on the agenda was the employee recognition. Those recognized for their years of service to the State of Montana were Lee Barta for 5 years, Carol Code and Melinda Buxton for 10 years. Ruddy Reilly was recognized for his State of Montana Excellence in Performance award.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.. The next meeting is scheduled for April 15, 1996.


George Hageman, Chairman


Thaddeus Mayer, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman George Hageman on April 15, 1996 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

George Hageman, Chairman
 Ruben McKinney, Member
 Johnny Buck, Member
 Tot Mayer, Member
 Barbara Ellestad, Member
 Jim Jacobsen, Administrator

Ruddy Reilly, Sen. Serv. Officer
 Lee Ann Welch, Office Manger
 Carl Nordberg, American Legion, Adj.
 MG Prendergast
 Doug Booker

Chairman Hageman opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there.

George Hageman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Johnny Buck seconded the motion and it was carried.

For the Department of Military Affairs, MG Prendergast talked about the VA Restructure Plan and mentioned that Jim keeps him informed about everything that is going on in that area and we have complete support from the Department of Military Affairs, the Congressional Delegation and Governor Racicot. MG Prendergast informed everyone about the new Armed Forces Reserve Center here in Helena to replace the Armory. The new building will be 165,000 square feet and will be located out at Fort Harrison.

Jim briefed everyone on the General Fund explaining expenditures per office and projected spendings for the remainder of the Fiscal Year. Special Fund monies this year purchased a cement bench, a new directory sign and a dump truck along with other needed miscellaneous items. Also discussed in the budget report were the new budget proposals for Fiscal Year 98/99. In looking ahead with the VA Restructuring Plan we will need more General Fund monies for travel, training and communications. Under Special Revenue Funds, we are projecting out for a new cemetery in Eastern Montana to include one full-time employee and operating expenses for Fiscal Year 99. Doug Booker explained that the new budget proposals will go through a priortizational process.

For the Personnel Report, the Progressive Requirement System was explained to everyone in attendance. This report shows when all personnel will be promoted according to longevity, testing and performance appraisals.

The main item on the Operations/Training Report is the VA Restructuring Plan. Jim familiarized everyone with the factsheet and answered questions. Jim reviewed the Training Session agenda which will be in October, 1996. We will also be asking the Legislature for more money in order to have a second training session. The VVA training in Washington DC will be held in June this year. Valerie Martin and Patricia Crowley will be attending. Art Tyler will be attending the American Legion training in July. Jim reviewed the statistics charts with everyone and brought them up-do-date on the whole operation.

Security and safety programs have been a new issue with Military Affairs. Herbie and Lee Ann are in charge of the new Safety program. Last month every traveling office received a box full of safety equipment for their cars such as flairs, first aid kits, battery cables and anything that would assist in an emergency on the road.

The Bozeman office will be moving from the Job Service building to the Bozeman Armory.

In the next up-coming months there may be a new program for leasing vehicles. As of this date the State Motor Pool is only available to Helena based employees. Each of the offices that travel would be able to lease a vehicle. The cost would be \$2.50 per day or 17 cents a mile whichever is greater. This would be a taxpayer savings.

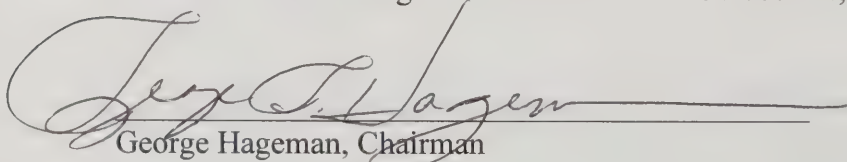
Since the last Board visit to the cemetery, there hasn't been much change as far as construction goes. The end of April we will be firing up the sprinkler system and the contractor will come back to make sure that it works. The VA is giving back a dump truck that we use on occasion. Jim tracked it down and was able to bid on it before it went to public auction. It's a 1985 Dodge 1 ton dump truck. Beginning the new Fiscal Year July 1, Jim will be purchasing a brand new, bigger, better John Deere mower.

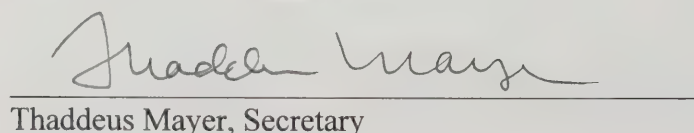
The Memorial Day Ceremony will be on May 30, 1996 which is the traditional day. This year we will incorporate the wreath laying.

Jim was invited to the County Treasurers meeting in Big Sky and was able to talk about the sales of our veteran license plates and also discussed the new headstone issue.

Barbara made a motion that we allow flags to be flown 365 days over any grave headstone. Currently the administrative rule says "All graves will be decorated on the work day immediately preceding Memorial Day and Veterans' Day with small United States flags, which will be removed on the first work day after those holidays. Flags are not permitted on graves at any other time. (History: Sec. 10-2-602 MCA; IMP, Sec. 10-2-602 MCA; NEW, 1987 MAR p. 776 Eff. 6/12/87.) Ruben seconded the motion. Jim will do some checking to see what is involved in making this change.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m. The next meeting date is scheduled for October 11, 1996.


George Hageman, Chairman


Thaddeus Mayer, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman George Hageman on October 11, 1996 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

George Hageman, Chairman

Barbara Ellestad, Member

Johnny Buck, Member

Tot Mayer, Member

Jim Jacobsen, Administrator

Ruddy Reilly, Sen. Serv. Officer

Lee Ann Welch, Office Manger

Doug Booker

Mike Hanshew, Director-DHHS

Ed Croucher, Glendive Vets Home

Carl Nordberg, American Legion, Adj

Hal Manson

Earl Vermillion, DAV

MG Prendergast

Chairman Hageman opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Tot Mayer seconded the motion and it was carried.

Ruben McKinney was not present as there was a death in his family.

There was an election of officers. Tot Mayer is the new Chairman, Johnny Buck, Vice Chairman and Barbara Ellestad, Secretary.

For the Department of Military Affairs, MG Prendergast talked about his travels around the state and he wanted everyone to know that he has never had any complaints about the work our offices do. MG Prendergast stated that we have complete support from the Department of Military Affairs, the Congressional Delegation and Governor Racicot. Jim assured the General that he will keep him and Governor Racicot aware and up-to-date on the VA Restructure Program. The General presented Cheryl Heald with a certificate for being nominated employee of the year.

The General Fund budget 1992-1996 expenditures were reviewed. The upgrades were discussed as far as the impact they have on the budget. These are over and above our personnel expenditures, however, they should self correct during the 98-99 budget year. The new proposals for FY98-99 were reviewed. The Bozeman office moved into the National Guard Armory building versus renting space. Pending is the leased vehicle program, repair and maintenance of equipment and monies for software and computer equipment. We will not be asking for new spending authority for the special fund budget but we will be asking for funds for the proposed new cemetery in Eastern Montana.

Personnel Progress reports were viewed. Two expert presentations were given during the training session. These two will be upgraded to the 3rd level of the personnel progression plan and two others will be upgraded to the 2nd level. Jim requested the Boards approval of the upgrades and was granted. Bill Hutton, our new service officer in Bozeman was introduced to the Board.

In the Operations/Training report, Jim briefed the Board on the weeks activities to include Dr. Batliner, VISN #19 Director who came up from Denver to give everyone an update on the reorganization of Long Term Care, Primary Care, Mental Health Care and Surgery. Joe

Underkofler, Director of Fort Harrison VA and Richard Stanley from the Miles City VA were also there to give their support to Dr. Batliner. The day continued on with computer training and training on Personal hearings. Keith Snyder from Washington, DC gave a two day VVA training.. This past year Val, Patricia and Art went to week long training on Veterans Benefits.

For the cemetery report, Jim mentioned that the Cemetery Advisory Council meets on a quarterly basis. The new sprinkler system was installed this past summer. The next phase of construction will be to pave the road out to the maintenance building. Plans and specs have been approved and now it goes out to bid. This will be the last construction project for the cemetery. We are still hoping for signs to be placed on the highways giving directions to the Veterans Cemetery. Over all the license plate sales are moving along at a constant flow. Jim is working on changing the rule about flying flags 365 days a year at the cemetery.

The legislation process for the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery was discussed. The action plan chart explained the step by step process for the site selection. Jim asked the Board to study the draft copy and give their comments on the "Request for Proposal". The plan is to select the site, start construction, hire a half time employee during construction and than move that person to full time status when the cemetery opens in July, 1999.

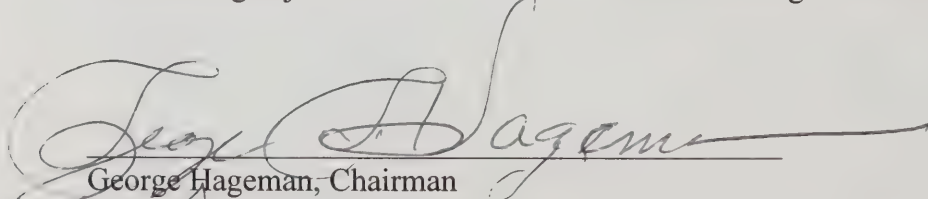
Jim attended the State Directors conference in Washington, DC last May, in Arizona last September and also attended the VFW, DAV and American Legion state conventions.

Jim introduced Mike Hanshew from the Department of Health and Human Services. Mike oversees the operations of the two veterans homes. Mike has asked for support during the legislation for more staff at Columbia Falls, using cigarette tax monies, keeping legislative sub-committee on veterans needs, veterans long term health care and refurbishing the Old Soldiers building at the Columbia Falls Home. Ed Croucher stated the Glendive Nursing Home is showing a steady increase in patient population.

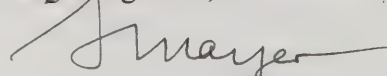
Information on the Veterans Advisory Council has been sent out. This would be a group of veterans getting together to exchange information and then having a voice during the Legislative Session.

Employees were recognized for years in State government. Len Leibinger-10 years, Wales Davis-5 years, Rodney Boyer - 5 years, Herberta Woslager -5 years and Wayne Carlson-5 years.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m. The next meeting date is scheduled for Feburary, 1997.



George Hageman, Chairman



Thaddeus Mayer, Secretary

A regular meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman George Hageman on January 22, 1997 at 1:00 p.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Tot Mayer, Chairman
Barbara Ellestad, Member
Johnny Buck, Member
George Hageman, Member
Ruben McKinney, Member
Jim Jacobsen, Administrator

Lee Ann Welch, Office Manager
MG Prendergast
Doug Booker
COL Ray Read
Carl Nordberg, American Legion
Hal Manson, American Legion

Chairman Mayer opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Barbara Ellestad seconded the motion and it was carried.

MG Prendergast began the meeting stating we are going to have a very exciting Legislative session. Jim and MG Prendergast met with the Governor on the cemetery in Eastern Montana and we have full support from the Governor and the Department of Military Affairs.

Doug Booker briefed the Board about the Legislative Financial Committee and he feels confident that things should go pretty smooth even though they have been given lots of information and requests. If the Eastern Montana Cemetery bill passes, Jim asked Doug what the procedure will be for setting up spending authority accounts.

The budget report shows that we are half way through the year and we are pretty much on target. We are presently making up the differences for 7 upgrades that occurred in October of 1995, across the board increases in September of 1996 and new computer phone lines. These differences will be built into the FY98-99 budget. Jim will not be traveling to Washington for the Administrator's conference and one month of travel per office will be cut during the January thru June timeframe to cover projected shortages for FY97. Jim went into further detail on the FY98-99 budget proposals to include leased vehicles, copiers, computers and software.

A new part-time employee has been hired at the cemetery. The license plate sales are still up. We have 2 more construction jobs left. We are currently evaluating the bids on the extension of the sprinkler system. The final project will be the paving.

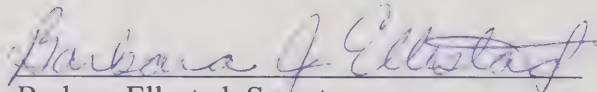
The new Eastern Montana State Cemetery factsheet was reviewed along with House Bill 18 (site selection of the new cemetery). Representative John Johnson from Glendive will introduce the bill. When the bill is passed, we will have 90 days to send out the RFP's (Request for Proposal). Jim explained to the Board the process for the site selection from evaluating the proposals in July to Town Hall meetings in August. We are presently asking the Legislature for \$10,000 to fund the site selection project. Tot gave an update on the Missoula cemetery.

For the Administrator's Report, Jim reviewed with the Board the veterans legislative bills. These bills include; Continue Interim Committee on Veterans Needs, Revise Military Property Tax, Revise Disabled Veteran Property Tax Exemption and Veterans Preference.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m. The next meeting date is scheduled for July 11, 1997



Thaddeus Mayer, Chairman


Barbara Ellestad, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Tot Mayer on July 11, 1997 at 11:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Tot Mayer, Chairman
Barbara Ellestad, Member
Johnny Buck, Member
George Hageman, Member
Ruben McKinney, Member

Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Lee Ann Welch, Office Manager
Doug Booker

Chairman Mayer opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Barbara Ellestad seconded the motion and it was carried.

General Prendergast was not available for the Board meeting as he is in Browning along with Wales Davis for a veterans ceremony.

Doug Booker talked about putting together the budgets for FY98. Due to new legislation, there have been some changes and Doug will be meeting with all Division Administrators the week of July 28 to discuss the new plans. As of today we have not received the final year end budget report as bills for FY97 are still coming in. The final projection shows approximately \$500.00 left in General Fund. Jim briefed the Board on the spending authority in license plate, donations and plot allowance for the cemetery. Plot allowance and donations for the new cemetery will be placed in a separate account for tracking purposes.

Jim explained to the Board that the \$50.00 honorarium for cemetery site selection will be paid out of the General Fund for the regular Board meeting. All other travel expenses concerning the site selection will be paid out of veterans license plate monies. In August, when the Board travels to Miles City for the site visit and the public hearing, all expenses will be paid from the license plate funds.

The personnel position progression report was discussed. This is the new step ladder for the employees and also keeps track of upgrades that could affect the budget.

Jim went over the operations statistics to show the Board what it costs to run each office around the state. The VA continues to make changes in benefits administration. There has not been any more talk about closing Ft. Harrison, however, they are continuing to look at ways to save money. The VA has and will be opening up outpatient clinics in Anaconda, Whitefish, Missoula, Billings and Great Falls.

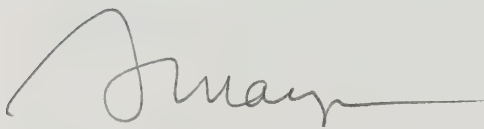
The training session this year will be October 6 - 10. This year we will be combining our training with the Federal VA. We have a Judge from the Federal Court of Veterans Appeals coming to give a presentation on the COVA process along with a presenter from the Board of Veterans Appeals and one from the Central Office to speak about Compensation and Pension. The next day of training we will have Dr. Battliner, VISN director, Joe Underkofler, Ft. Harrison Director and Richard Stanley, Miles City Director available for VA updates, questions and answers.

This month Bill Hutton our Service Officer from Bozeman will be attending the American Legion training in Indianapolis paid for by the American Legion.

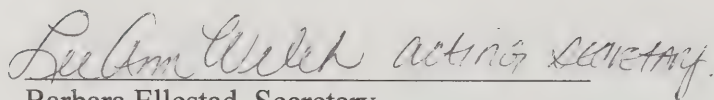
This past month we purchased two new copiers for Butte and Helena. We also renewed our office leases in Great Falls and Butte. The Butte lease was changed from a 90 to a 60 day notice of termination. Our four new leased vehicles for Bozeman, Miles City, Great Falls and Kalispell will be ready for delivery the end of July.

As of today there are 2 new highway signs coming into Helena showing the way to the State Veterans Cemetery.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30. The next meeting is scheduled for October 10, 1997.



Thaddeus Mayer, Chairman



Barbara Ellestad, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Tot Mayer on October 10, 1997 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Tot Mayer, Chairman
Karen Furu, Member
Johnny Buck, Member
George Hageman, Member
Ruben McKinney, Member

Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Lee Ann Welch, Office Manager
MG Prendergast, TAG
Hal Manson, American Legion
MVAD Employees

Chairman Mayer opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Johnny Buck seconded the motion and it was carried.

Our new Board member, Karen Furu, was introduced to everyone.

An election of officers was held. Johnny Buck is the new Chairman, Ruben McKinney is Vice Chairman and George Hageman is the new Secretary.

MG Prendergast wanted everyone to know that Jim is doing a great job. Once a month he meets with the Governor and keeps him informed on everything that's new and improved with the Veterans Affairs Division.

Doug Booker was not available for the Budget report, however, Jim briefly explained to Karen how MVAD budgets General Fund monies. Jim also talked about the Operations report and the breakdown of what it cost to run each of the offices. The Special Fund (cemetery) monies was talked about as far as how we use each category to include Plot Allowance, Donations and License Plates.

The personnel position report shows when all employees are due for their upgrades and certificates. We are approved for 19.3 employees. The 1997 legislature has approved a part-time cemetery person for the new Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery.

This year we were able to collaborate with the Federal VA for our training session. Presentations were given by Judge Farley, member of the Federal Court of Veterans Appeals, Roger Bauer, Board of Veterans Appeals, and Kristine Moffitt, Compensation and Pension Services. On the health side we had presentations from the VISN personnel, Joe Underkofler, Mike Thompson and Robert Lougee. Virginia Cameron gave a presentation on Personnel matters. This fall the VFW has asked us for our help with workshops throughout the State.

The four new leased vehicles have been delivered to Kalispell, Bozeman, Great Falls and Miles City. Missoula did not need a leased vehicle as it wouldn't be cost effective and Butte did not get one as Art lives here and uses the Motor Pool vehicles.

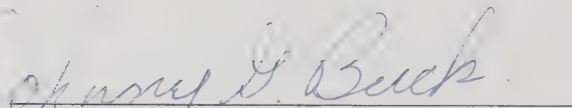
Jim has reminded everyone to use the green cemetery packet for informational use as it is updated every year and contains everything you need to know about the cemetery. Jim is contemplating changing or backing out the Administrative Rules and making them Department of Military or Board of Veterans Affairs rules. This way we can easily make adjustment to them without having to go before the Legislature. We applied for well permits for the cemetery only to find out that there are four objectors. After meeting with the objectors we now have an agreement signed saying that we would monitor the wells to make sure they are not drawing down on the objectors wells. Jim is looking to revise the current cemetery donation poster to incorporate the new Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery.

The Governor approved the Miles City site for the new Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery per the Board's recommendation. The next phase is to go before the State Land Board. Jim is awaiting several documents from the city and county to include a title commitment, survey and an appraisal. The other document needed and received was an environmental assessment. This was contracted with a firm out of Billings. The contractor stated that it is free and clear of any environmental impacts. The next step is to file our application with the Federal VA. If all goes well we hope to have the first burial in July of 1999.

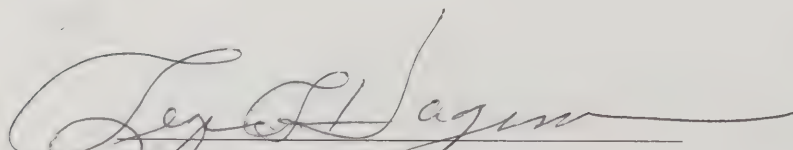
The Legislature has appointed a Joint Interim Sub-committee to study veterans needs. The committee met once out at Ft. Harrison in September. They will meet again this coming March in Columbia Falls to study some issues that arose. Jim's concerns were the \$250.00 county burial and the \$70.00 headstone setting fees.

For employee recognition, Art Tyler was awarded a pin and certificate for 10 years of service and Jim Jacobsen for 5 years.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30. The next meeting date is set for some time in the summer of 1998.



Johnny Buck, Chairman



George Hageman, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Johnny Buck on April 17, 1998 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Johnny Buck, Chairman
 Karen Furu, Member
 Tot Mayer, Member
 George Hageman, Member
 Ruben McKinney, Member

Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Lee Ann Welch, Office Manager
 MG Prendergast, TAG
 Doug Booker, Centralized Services
 Hal Manson, American Legion

Chairman Buck opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Tot Mayer seconded the motion and it was carried.

MG Prendergast thanked the Board for all their support. He talked about prioritizing the new Legislative budget proposals for the Department of Military Affairs.

The budget report sheet was reviewed to show how the General Fund monies are spread out among the various categories such as personnel, supplies and communications. We are now nearing Fiscal Year End and don't foresee any budget challenges.

There has been a change in the Plot Allowance monies application. Instead of filing individual claims on each veteran, the paper work now consists of a one page claim to include the names of all veterans buried during that month and then one check is received in about 10 working days.

For the 1999 Legislative session, we will be asking for a half time position for the Cemetery, \$66,000 for the World War II Memorial, \$5,000 per year in 1999/2000 for training and \$6,000 per year for computers. The half time position will be paid out of the General Fund budget. The assistant cemetery sexton would work for the veterans cemetery for 6 months and then Facilities Management Office of Department of Military Affairs for the other 6 months. The World War II Memorial will be built in Washington DC and requires donations. It will cost 100 million dollars to build. Each state is being asked to donate \$1.00 per WWII veteran and the state of Montana has 66,000 veterans. Jim has the support of the Legislative Joint Interim Sub-committee and the Governor wants to put it in his budget.

Jim reviewed the monthly/yearly statistics which show how many transmittals, POA and Federal monies that were generated through the offices. The statistics also show how much it costs to operate each year.

At the Board meeting last October, there was some talk about the back log on claims at Fort Harrison. Since that time there has been a new Adjudication Officer hired and within the first 4 months he was able to pinpoint the problems and has solutions for them. There were 1700 cases on backlog and some were over a year old. The new AO sent them out to other Regional Offices to be adjudicated. Ruddy also mentioned the VA will be getting a new/updated data computer system which will give our offices more access to necessary information for filing veterans claims.

At the Annual Training Session we will have a healthcare update from Joe Underkofler, benefits update from Dean Kurtz, the new Adjudication Officer, and hearing presentations with John Peterson, a hearing officer from Salt Lake.

A rumor that was started by someone on the Internet that said if veterans didn't enroll with the VA by October, 1998 they would lose all their veterans benefits. Veterans have been flocking to our offices and to the VA to get enrolled. This ended up being a positive thing for us as veterans calling to find out about the rumor were advised that we have offices that serve veterans in their area.

The VA now has outpatient clinics in Great Falls, Anaconda, Whitefish, Helena, Miles City, Billings and they are about ready to open up one in Bozeman. The VA is looking to contract in the Northeastern part of the state.

The personnel report shows that Ruddy Reilly will have 30 years of employment in July and Patricia Crowley has 5 years. Bill Hutton has reached his 3 ½ year mark and will be promoted from Grade 10 to Grade 11. Jim Cameron has been hired as the part-time groundskeeper.

The Finlen Hotel in Butte, where our office is located, may be remodeling and therefore we may have to move. We will continually be looking for better office space in the Kalispell Guard building. Hopefully with some reorganization amongst the units, there may be better space available.

The Administrative Rules for the Montana State Veterans Cemetery are under revision. Jim has asked everyone to review them as new rules will have to be written for the new cemetery in Miles City.

There is now an agreement signed between Montana Veterans Affairs Division and the 4 objectors of the new wells drilled at the cemetery. Wayne monitors the wells every week to see if our wells are drawing down on the objectors' wells.

Stephen Ambrose will be the guest speaker for the Memorial Day Ceremony.


We have now moved on to section B for full sized burials at the cemetery. In Section A we were burying full size in every other plot with plans to come back at a later date and use the unused plots, however, when the hole was dug for new burials the previous ones were caving in.

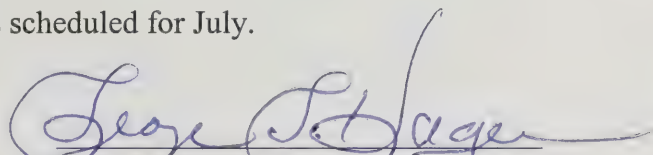
Jim went before the Land Board in January for the new Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery and received approval of the land donation from Custer County. We are still waiting for Congress to decide if they are going to give state veterans cemeteries 100% funding for construction. We will probably know in October, 1998. In the meantime we are looking at contracting with the County to take care of the cemetery as far as operation and maintenance. An engineering firm from Billings has been hired to draw up the plans for the cemetery and we should have the blue prints by June or July.

Jim is asking for \$100,000 construction spending authority each year for FY2000 and FY2001 on the 50/50 program. The 2nd year would consist of improving and paving the road network and expanding the sprinkler system. The 3rd year we would further expand the sprinkler system and finish paving the roads.

A letter has been sent out to all the Commanders of all the state veteran service organizations asking them to nominate a primary and alternate person to be on the Eastern Montana State Cemetery Advisory Council. Jim will organize a town hall meeting along with the Advisory Council in Miles City in June. Meetings will then be scheduled every three months.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 and the next meeting is scheduled for July.


Johnny Buck, Chairman


George Hageman, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Johnny Buck on October 9, 1998 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Johnny Buck, Chairman
George Hageman, Member
Ruben McKinney, Member
Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Lee Ann Welch, Office Manager

MG Prendergast, TAG
Doug Booker, Centralized Services
Hal Manson, American Legion
MVAD Employees

Chairman Buck opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Ruben McKinney seconded the motion and it was carried.

Jane Gerald and Pat Mewes were introduced as the new employees from Kalispell and Butte. Board members Karen Furu and Thaddeus Mayer were unable to attend the Board meeting.

MG Prendergast talked about the construction program within the Department of Military Affairs. There is a new Army Aviation Support building, new BOQ and BEQ, and soon the Armed Forces Reserve Building. MG Prendergast said this could be a difficult Legislative session. He is meeting with the Governor's budget committee this week. The General supports VA, DES and OS moving into the new Armed Forces Reserve Building.

Jim talked about the FY99 budget and the breakout of the various categories which is a mirror image of FY98. We have a budget meeting with Centralized Services on a monthly basis. With the Cemetery budget, we still have to go before the Legislature for spending authority. Unlike general fund, special fund rolls over to the next year. Last year we purchased a new tractor for the cemetery and this year we will seal and repair some cracks on the roads in the cemetery. We received a \$2,153 donation from the Montana American Legion Auxiliary for the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery.

The new budget proposals for FY2000/2001 were discussed. We are asking for a .50 FTE for the cemetery, a donation of \$66,000 for the WWII memorial, more money for training, equipment and internet access. Doug Booker said that overall as a department we are doing pretty good.

The Legislative auditors were here for the last 3 months with the final report forthcoming.

Jim explained the employee roster to everyone which shows employee promotions and longevity.

For the annual training this year, the employees were given veteran files to prepare and present a hearing in order to help the employees with the hearing preparation. Ruddy Reilly states that we have had problems with claim development and its been hard for the rating board to rate claims if they are not fully developed. He feels this is the best training ever.

The new VA clinics throughout the state appear to be working well.

Ruddy is supporting the American Legion District meetings and the VFW District meetings will be done by Fred Olson their service officer.

Hal Manson mentioned that the cigarette tax, after another meeting with the Legislative committee, will continue to be earmarked for the veterans homes.

The Butte office has moved out of the Finlen Hotel and into the National Guard Armory in Butte. There is a possibility that Kalispell and Bozeman will be moving into new Guard buildings being built in the future.

The leased vehicle program is still progressing smoothly. One drawback is the per day price which has gone from \$2.50 per day to \$8.00 per day. The reason is that other agencies predicted they would use the cars more and they haven't so State Motor Pool was forced to raise the price.

Jim reported there are 790 veterans now buried at the cemetery.

The new well permits has been an expensive challenge. We have 4 people objecting our wells so Wayne does weekly checks on the water flow of all the wells. In November we have a report from the hydrologist we have hired.

Steven Ambrose was the guest speaker at the last Memorial Day ceremony at the Cemetery.

Jim talked about the 2 new Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery plans/layouts along with the Center Circle designs. George moved approval of plan #2, Johnny seconded the motion and it was carried. The cemetery advisory council wants the upright headstones, however, this topic will require more discussion.

The maintenance contract for the EMSVC was discussed. We will be charged \$26,000 per year for an FTE to be added to the Custer County cemetery crew.

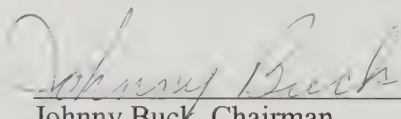
For the Administrator's report, Jim explained to the Board the following upcoming Legislative issues.

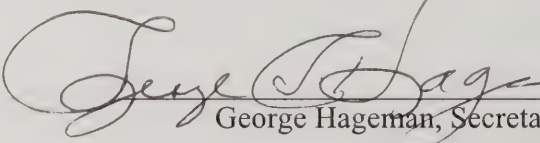
- There is a need to clarify the statutes regarding veteran burial allowances so there is no confusion on which county is responsible for payment.
- There is a need to clarify the statutes regarding the headstone setting payment.
- Veterans preference law.
- Making the veterans interim subcommittee permanent.
- National Guard retiree license plates.

For Employee recognition, we had Patricia Crowley with 5 years and Ruddy Reilly with 30 years of state service. Bill Hutton was recognized with an upgrade.

With election of officers, Ruben McKinney, Chairman, George Hageman, Vice Chairman and Karen Furu, Secretary.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 and the next meeting is scheduled for January/February 1999.


Johnny Buck, Chairman


George Hageman, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Ruben McKinney on January 17, 1999 at 1:00 p.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Ruben McKinney, Chairman
George Hageman, Member
Johnny Buck, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Tot Mayer, Member
Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Lee Ann Welch, Office Manager
Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

MG Prendergast, TAG
Doug Booker, Centralized Services
Joe Upshaw, 163rd
Larry Longfellow, VFW
Hal Manson, American Legion
John Sloan, DAV
Tony Cummings, American Legion

Chairman McKinney opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Tot Mayer seconded the motion and it was carried.

The Board meeting is being held on Sunday as the Legislature is meeting the next day to discuss the Department of Military's budget. Jim explained to everyone present where the meeting/hearing was going to be held and how it is all going to work. DMA had an information booklet made up for the legislators to explain all the department's goals/mission. This will be our opportunity to walk the committee through our mission and talk about our needs for the next 2 years.

There is a World War II Memorial being built in Washington, DC and they are asking each state to donate \$1.00 per WW II veteran from Montana. We will be asking the Legislature for \$66,000 from the General Fund. We will also be asking for 3 new computers per year for the next 2 years.

Jim will also be talking to the legislators about spending authority for the cemeteries. The Federal VA will now pay 100% of the construction and equipment for state veterans cemeteries.

Pros and cons were discussed about moving all veteran organizations out of the Veterans and Pioneers Building to the state wing at the new Armed Forces building at Fort Harrison.

Rodney Boyer has resigned as the Service Officer in Miles City. Ruddy and Lee Ann will be going to Billings to do interviews.

Pat Mews, the Butte Service Technician, is on leave without pay due to a car accident.

Performance appraisals are due the end of January. We are still having challenges with Ruddy's job description.

Jim is working on the annual training session agenda for October 1999.

The National Guard is requesting 2 new National Guard Armory buildings in Kalispell and Bozeman.

All is well at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery. The entire road network has been sealed. We continue to monitor the wells at the cemetery to see if they are affecting the objectors wells. The yearly report shows that we are not affecting them. We may petition to stop the monitoring. Jim mentioned that the cemetery advisory committee discussed free burial for the spouses. The Board then decided to continue the fee for spouse burial.

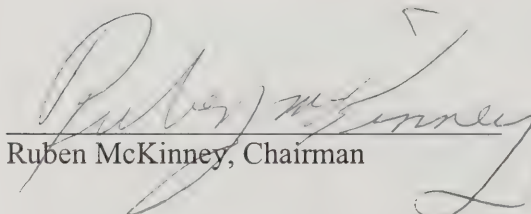
The next steps for opening the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery with the 100% funding are:

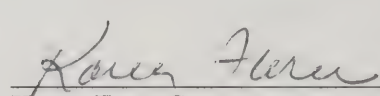
- Legislative Approval
- Plans & Specs
- Bids
- Select contractor
- Announce the Contractor to the VA
- Award the Contract
- Construction

We have a contract list put together for the new cemetery. Jim discussed this with the Board. The upright headstone issue was also discussed.

Jim will be going to Washington DC in March for the State Administrators convention. The Board approved Jim's attendance at the fall convention in Hawaii.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m. The next meeting date will May 24, 1999


Ruben McKinney, Chairman


Karen Furu, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Ruben McKinney on May 24, 1999 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Ruben McKinney, Chairman
George Hageman, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Tot Mayer, Member
Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Lee Ann Welch, Office Manager
Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

Hal Manson, American Legion
John Linzinski, DAV

Chairman McKinney opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Tot Mayer seconded the motion and it was carried. It was noted that Johnny Buck was unable to attend due to a funeral.

The Budget Report indicates that the General Fund budget has accrued extra money as there was a vacancy in Butte for approximately 8 months. The budget countdown continues and we expect to use the money for computers and printers.

The Cemetery Budget Report indicates the full spending authority was spent in plot allowance with the sealing of the road and grave digging. Little was spent in donations in order to maintain the bank balance. Ruben talked about advertising veteran license plates.

Everyone was encouraged to start thinking about new legislation. The Interim Legislative Subcommittee will be meeting to consider veterans issues. The World War II memorial bill was passed and Jim talked about having a ceremony to present the money. We would get a dignitary from Washington and have the Governor present the check to them. We will also have a Board meeting in conjunction with the presentation.

The Legislature approved the building of a state wing on the new National Guard Armory in Helena. This includes state agencies and the other organizations that are now at the Veterans and Pioneers Building. This will take place in 3 to 4 years. The National Guard will coordinate with everyone regarding space they will require.

For the personnel report, Jim talked about the upgrades and our new employees. We will responsible for the upgrades through vacancy savings as we will no longer be able to move money out of operations. Melinda Buxton, in Missoula, will start working 32 hours a week and Lori Perkio was rehired in Butte at 32 hours per week.

Pat Crowley and Sherry Stewart are eligible for promotion this year. Jane Gerald, Valerie Martin and Lee Ann Welch will received their State pins for their years of service to State government. Jane has 20, Val has 15 and Lee Ann has 10.

Annual training this year will be employees in small groups for more individualized training. They will work on computer training and claim development. Ruddy, Patricia and Herbie will be doing the training.

The VA healthcare program is now called "VA Healthcare of Montana. We will be meeting with Joe Underkofler and Governor Racicot today to discuss the healthcare challenge.

There is a new armory being built in Bozeman and there is talk of a future armory in Kalispell. We have voiced our needs for space and equipment in these armories.

Our 4 leased motor pool vehicles have been rotated with other motor pool vehicles that have more miles on them.

We are now getting ready for our Memorial Day ceremony on May 30, 1999 which is the traditional day. MG Prendergast will be the guest speaker. An avenue of flags has been installed along with new lights on the flags and a new map insert has been placed in the Directory Sign.

Wayne continues to monitor the wells. The first year showed no change to the objectors' wells, however, we are still required to monitor them.

We reappointed the MSVC Advisory Council this year and the appointment will be in effect for the next 2 years.

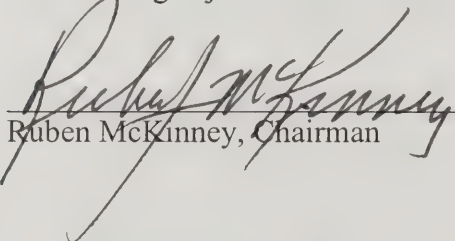
All the construction work is done at the MSVC for the foreseeable future. Current projection is 5 to 8 years before more construction is necessary.


Our thanks to Johnny Buck for his support in attending meetings at the new EMSVC. Jim discussed the new cemetery plans, plaques, trees, benches, contract, contract list, and upright headstones. The County has agreed to maintain the headstones. The headstones will be ordered out of the Helena office. Jim wants thoughts and ideas from the Board for the text on the gate. Jim put together an equipment list of what will be needed at the EMSVC by what we already have at the MSVC. There will be a ground breaking ceremony and we will wait for the opening ceremony to invite the Governor. Jim would also like to have a Board meeting in conjunction with the opening ceremony.

Jim has been invited by the VA to attend a meeting in Phoenix for 3 days in July. The VA will pay for the trip. Jim went to Washington, DC in March and will be going to Hawaii for the State Directors Conference. Jim will also be attending the DAV, VFW, and the American Legion conventions.

There is going to be a National Veterans Day Poster Contest involving all the schools in Montana. The Montana poster winner will then be sent to Washington DC.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 and the next meeting date is scheduled for October.


Ruben McKinney, Chairman


Karen Furu, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman George Hageman on October 18, 1999 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

George Hageman, Chairman
 Ruben McKinney, Member
 Karen Furu, Member
 Tot Mayer, Member
 Johnny Buck, Member
 Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Lee Ann Welch, Office Manager
 Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

Hal Manson, American Legion
 Doug Booker
 Larry Longfellow, VFW
 MG Prendergast

Chairman Hageman opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Johnny Buck seconded the motion and it was carried.

MG Prendergast reported that the ground has been broken for the new Armed forces building at Ft. Harrison. The building should be completed in 2 years at which time they will begin construction of the state wing. Other new armories planned around the state are in Bozeman, Kalispell, Missoula and Great Falls.

The second annual Homeless Standdown was held at Ft. Harrison within the National Guard area. It was reported that 70 homeless veterans attended. The first homeless veteran standdown was held in conjunction with the POW/MIA day at Memorial Park. This information will be reported to the Legislative Subcommittee November 8th and 9th.

Doug Booker talked about the new state accounting/budgeting system called SABHRS. It has been a challenge getting use to the new system, however, Doug feels it will get better. Doug will be meeting with program managers this month to see how everyone is doing and to see if any help/training is needed. SABHRS has been a challenge for us as we are not able to get any bank balance reports and the Montana State Veterans Cemetery and the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery accounts have been combined.

Jim discussed the personnel roster to include employees who will be getting promotions, pay raises and longevity increases which could affect the personnel budget. Melinda Buxton is now working 32 hours a week so she will now be included in the personnel progression system for upgrading. Carol Code received an award for employee of the year. Jane Gerald received her 20 year pin, Val Martin received her 15 year pin and Lee Ann Welch received her 10 year pin. Sherry Stewart was upgraded to Grade 12.

The Interim Legislative Sub-committee on Veterans Needs have met and will have several more meetings. Jim has already attended one and thought it went well. There will be 7 or 8 more meetings. Joe Underkofler will brief the committee on healthcare needs and Mike Hanshew will talk about the Veterans State nursing homes. This is a good way to get the Federal VA and veterans organizations involved. Jim sent out a memo to all MVAD employees and other veteran related organizations asking for their input for new legislation. Possible budget requests will be to get the Missoula position upgraded to full-time and ask for monies for the move to the new State wing building.

There has been talk about closing the Miles City nursing home as it's becoming too expensive to operate. Options are to move the residents elsewhere or contract out.

The logistic report shows that the 4 leased vehicles have been rotated. We are requesting space in the new armories in Bozeman and Kalispell. We may be looking for space in Miles City and the Billings office will be moving into the old Mental Health Clinic along with the Billings Vet Center.

The training session this year was done in small groups with Ruddy and Patricia doing the veterans claim training and Herbie doing the computer training. The groups went through files and discussed the quality of exams. Ruddy briefed the groups on new veteran information that he brought back from the National Convention that he attended. Ruddy would like to see the Service Officers get more involved with the claim as far as seeing it all the way through the system. Dean Kurtz retired as the adjudicator. There will be no monthly visits from the Hearing Officer

The hydrologists hired to help with monitoring the wells at the cemetery has suggested we stop monitoring as we are not affecting the surrounding wells.

Jim reported that there are almost 1000 veterans and spouses buried at the cemetery and Jim figures we have 5 - 8 years left in the current burial area. Montana Granite has resigned from setting our headstones, however, they have agreed to still accept the stone, cement the stone and deliver it to the cemetery for Wayne to set.

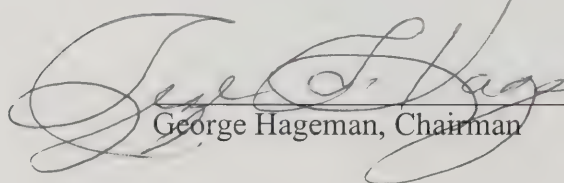
Jim has been meeting quarterly with the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery (EMSVC) committee. The bid opening is scheduled for October 20, 1999. The Federal VA must approve this bid award. The EMSVC is still slated for summer of 2000 opening.

Jim attended the State directors convention in Hawaii last September. Jim will be going to Colorado in November to meet with other state directors and talk about veteran issues.

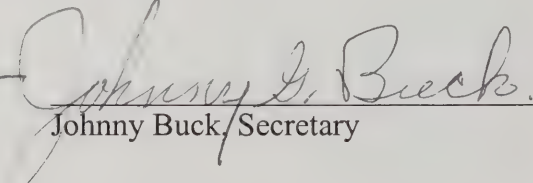
All the High Schools in Montana have been given a VA poster contest packet to design the new Veterans Day 2000 poster. Next spring the schools will submit them and they will be judged by a panel of veteran organizations and the Board of Veterans Affairs.

After this Board meeting, there was a ceremony with Governor Racicot presenting our State of Montana check in the amount of \$66,000 to (RET) MG Herrling for the World War II Memorial in Washington DC. Also after the meeting, the Board took Rodney Boyer to lunch to present him with a plaque of appreciation for his service with MVAD.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 and the next meeting date is scheduled for sometime in the Spring in conjunction with the possible groundbreaking of the EMSVC.



George Hageman, Chairman



Johnny Buck, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman George Hageman on April 3, 2000 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Ruben McKinney, Chairman
George Hageman, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Tot Mayer, Member
Johnny Buck, Member

Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer
Lee Ann Welch, Office Manager
Hal Manson, American Legion
Mike Hanshew, DPHHS
Joe Underkofler, Director-VA

Chairman Hageman opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Johnny Buck seconded the motion and it was carried.

MG Prendergast is in Seattle concerning the Libby situation. Doug Booker has resigned from the Department of Military Affairs and is now working for the Governor's Budget Office.

MG Prendergast has put together a group of people for the Homeless Veteran Coalition to include VA personnel, God's Love homeless shelter, Golden Triangle Mental Health and Helena Job Service. The group worked together to solve a transportation problem with the DAV van helping transport veterans to and from Ft. Harrison. Future projects include getting grants and designing a pamphlet of addresses and phone numbers of all veteran services in the Helena area.

Mike Hanshew reported that the 2 state veteran nursing homes are doing fine. There is a waiting list at Columbia Falls and after 4 years in operation, the Glendive veterans home has 50 of the 80 beds occupied. Glendive is enlarging the dining room and the Alzheimers unit. There has been some difficulty finding a replacement for Ed Croucher.

Joe Underkofler announced that John Peterson will be the new Adjudication Officer. Mr. Peterson will be working on the backlog of claims. The staff at the present time is young and they plan on getting a new computer program for faster ratings. On the healthcare side, Mr. Underkofler talked about downsizing in Miles City. Sidney clinic is now open and enhancing healthcare in the eastern part of the state. Healthcare expenses are up and the federal budget is not increasing.

The Budget Report indicates that we are running short in the Personal Service account. This is the first time we will be asking for help from DMA. We upgraded Patricia and Ruddy and this may account for the shortage.

We are now in the process of legislative budget proposals. We will be asking for an increase in the Missoula position, copier and computer replacements on a 4 year cycle and furniture and moving expenses. For the cemetery state special funds, we will be asking for spending authority.

Patricia and Ruddy have received their upgrades.

We are now at \$34 million in revenue and have 2 months to go. Annual training agenda for this fall is still in the planning stages.

The Billings office is all moved in to their new place with the Veterans Center. New armories in Bozeman, Kalispell and possibly Missoula are still being discussed. Joe Underkofler will make sure we get office space in Miles City if anything should happen.

Jim sent out a memo to the offices and various veteran organizations asking for requests for any new legislation.

Jim has been attending meetings with the Department of Revenue and they are talking about giving us the full \$10 from the license plate sales. License plate sales have gone up every year.

We just buried our 1000th veteran/spouse. We are getting ready to start up the wells and we have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that we are not affecting any of the objector's wells.

Jim Cameron will be the new headstone setter as Montana Granite felt it was too much work for them. He will be raising the setting fee from \$70 to \$85. The veterans family will be responsible for the remaining \$15. Jim Cameron will no longer be the Groundskeeper and the announcement for a new person will go out next week.

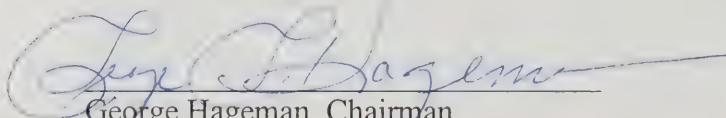
BG Hal Stearns will be our guest speaker for Memorial Day. We will also have an award ceremony for a deceased veteran who was awarded the Bronze Star.

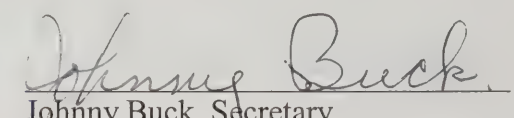
Construction has begun at the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery with completion date scheduled for October 1, 2000. Jim will be going to Miles City with Wayne Carlson to talk about the contract and the equipment. The groundbreaking ceremony will be April 26, 2000. Jim went over the draft program of events. We will plan a dedication ceremony in the fall.

Jim will be attending the NASDVA convention. He has appointments to meet with Senators Burns and Baucus and Representative Hill.

The Board voted on the 2 posters we received for the National Poster Contest for Veterans Day and selected one for the national competition.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 and the next meeting date is scheduled for October.


George Hageman, Chairman


Johnny Buck, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman George Hageman on September 22, 2000 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

George Hageman, Chairman
 Ruben McKinney, Member
 Tot Mayer, Member
 Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
 MG Prendergast, DMA
 BG Randy Mosley, DMA
 Hal Manson, American Legion
 Larry Thebo, Guest
 MVAD employees

Chairman Hageman opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. Board members Johnny Buck and Karen Furu were unable to attend. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Ruben McKinney seconded the motion and it was carried.

MG Prendergast introduced BG Randy Mosley as the new Deputy Director for Department of Military Affairs. BG Mosley talked about his military background and his last position with the State of Montana. MG Prendergast talked about the fire situation giving us the statistics as far as number of firefighters and how much was spent on the fire. FEMA will be setting up shop in the gym this week for about a 2 month stay.

The new National Guard Armory building should be ready for the Federal employees November 2001. The state wing should be ready about 1 ½ years after the Federal employees move in. The new armories in Bozeman, Kalispell, Missoula and Dillon will be next on the construction agenda.

The veterans coalition project was a success. The idea was to get all the resources together with state and federal to help veterans. Now we need to get this done in other cities throughout the state. The homeless stand down reported an array of health professionals, however, only 15 people attended. Libby will have a standdown in October and Sherry and Jane will attend.

MG Prendergast thanked all the MVAD employees for their work with veterans. He had no complaints and lots of compliments on the cemetery. He also thanked Hal Manson for his work with the honor guard.

License plate sales have been down because of the new Montana plate. The Army veterans were concerned about their insignia. Dean Roberts will try to get the seal and eagle on the Army plate.

We will not have an FTE with the new cemetery in Miles City. Custer County will add a man to their cemetery crew and we will contract with them.

For this legislative session we will be asking for .20% increase for FTE in the Missoula office, 2 copiers for Bozeman and Great Falls and 8 new computers. The cemetery will be asking for spending authority in the cemetery accounts.

The training session was a success this year. MVAD employees were able to train with the VA employees. Presentations were given by Lori Perkio, Melinda Buxton and Dorothy Jarosz along with expert updates.

Ruddy talked about issues with veterans healthcare and benefits. We have a new hearing officer out at the Fort and Ruddy said he is doing a great job. There will no longer be a hearing officer coming out of Salt Lake. There are lots of new trainees in the Rating Board and the ratings have been low. The healthcare system is being reviewed as there are many new veteran clinics throughout Montana and they are being heavily used causing a backlog for appointments. They are also looking into getting the private doctors to write prescriptions and have the VA fill them. This would help the backlog by 50%.

The VA is still trying to sell or lease buildings in the VA complex in Miles City. They have assured us that Dan will always have office space with them. Ruddy and Pat will be moving into new offices at the Fort within the next month. We are still involved with the vehicle leasing program. The cost to operate the vehicles has risen, however, we will be funded for the increase.

We are still monitoring our wells at the Cemetery and are looking at digging more wells in the future.

Memorial Day ceremony went well with BG Stearns as the guest speaker.

There is a study going on now to determine if the cemetery should receive the full \$10.00 for the sale of veterans license plates. Department of Revenue thinks this would be easier for everyone.

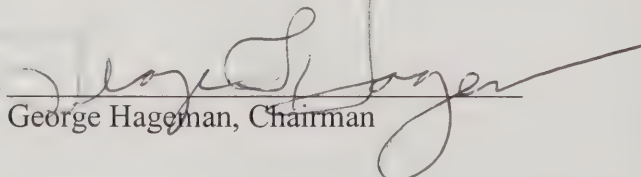
Jim Cameron resigned as Groundskeeper and took over the job of setting our headstones.

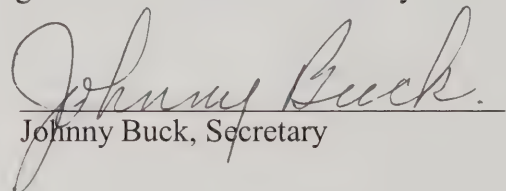
Construction continues at the EMSVC. There has been a few challenges with the contractor, however, we plan on having opening ceremonies next Memorial Day. The groundbreaking ceremony held in April was a big success. Jim is working with the Department of Transportation on getting highway signs for the cemetery and also getting the cemetery listed on the Montana highway map. Jim is also working on getting a headstone setting person in Miles City.

Jim attended the American Legion, VFW and DAV conventions. The Governor's Conference on Aging is in Billings and Cheryl will attend.

Election of Officers was held. Karen is now the Chairman, Johnny, Vice Chairman and Tot, Secretary.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 and the next meeting date is scheduled for January.


George Hageman, Chairman


Johnny Buck, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Karen Furu on January 11, 2001 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Karen Furu, Chairman
 Ruben McKinney, Member
 Tot Mayer, Member
 Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

Lee Ann Hall, Officer Manager
 Hal Manson, AL
 Dan Antonietti, VFW
 MG Prendergast, DMA
 BG Randy Mosley, DMA

Chairman Furu opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Tot Mayer seconded the motion and it was carried.

MG Prendergast talked about the new Armed Forces Reserve Center. The Federal employees will be moved in by December 2001. The State wing will go out for bid in March 2001 with an estimated moving date of September 2002 for the State employees.

Jim, Hal Manson and Dan Antonietti will be attending all the legislative hearings on veterans issues. Jim is printing out the text on the veterans bills for Hal and Dan to familiarize themselves before going to the hearings. BG Randy Mosley expressed his appreciation to Hal and Dan and mentioned that they are a very important link to the Department of Military Affairs.

Jim discussed the budget report and the concerns he has about vacancy savings. We are expected to save \$17,000 in vacancy saving for personnel services but because we have not had any turn over we've been unable to come up with the money. Jim will be asking the Department to see if we can get money from a special fund account with the Governor's budget office.

We will be asking for spending authority for the cemetery accounts. It costs \$75,000 per year to operate the two cemeteries. There has been no activity at the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery, however, we have spent money in the Eastern accounts for travel.

The Legislative budget subcommittee was briefed on the Department and then were taken on a tour of all the facilities. Tomorrow the committee will meet to hear the budget requests. We will be asking for the Missoula position to be brought up to full time, replacement of computers, 2 new copiers and spending authority for the cemeteries. There were discussions about deleting monies from our General Fund account and replacing it with Special funds to pay for Jim and Lee Ann's salaries. Jim expressed some concerns about tapping into the cemetery monies.

Jim talked about the license plate sales being down as a result of the new license plates being sold as NEW plates and the NEW plates not being ready on time forcing veterans to buy regular plates.

On the legislative report there is a bill out that if passed will give up the full \$10.00 for the sale of veteran license plates. The Department of Justice will see how many veteran plates were sold and then send us that amount of money at the end of the fiscal year.

On the personnel side, Wales Davis was going to retire in July, 2001 but has since decided not to retire this year.

Jim and Cindy Stenger from Ft. Harrison went to Bozeman to do a call in talk show on TV about veterans benefits. This show tripled the number of calls that all the other talk shows have done. There wasn't time to take all the calls but they took phone numbers and sent them to Jim to call back.

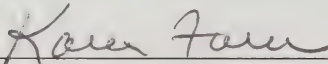
Ruddy talked about the appointment problem for healthcare at the clinics. It seems the clinics are too successful. On the benefits side, they have stopped hearings for the time being until they can get caught up.

The Montana State Veterans Cemetery has now buried over 1100 veterans and spouses. Future projects for the cemetery are to add on to the building, dig more wells and develop another section for burial.

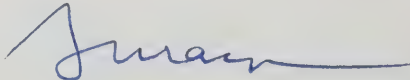
The Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery construction has shut down for the winter. The landscaping and lawn need to be finished and there is still some work is left to do on the building. Jim will be ordering the equipment this April and the opening ceremony will be on Memorial Day. We will be contracting with a company out of South Dakota to set the upright headstones. Highway signs have been put up on both sides of the cemetery.

Jim will be attending the annual State Directors of Veterans Affairs conference in Washington, DC in April.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 and the next meeting date is scheduled for Memorial Day in Miles City.



Karen Furu, Chairman



Thaddeus Mayer, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Karen Furu on May 28, 2001 at 8:00 a.m. in Miles City with the following individuals present:

Karen Furu, Chairman
 Ruben McKinney, Member
 Tot Mayer, Member
 Johnny Buck, Member
 George Hageman, Member

Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Lee Ann Hall, Officer Manager
 Bill Jayne, State Cemetery Grants Program
 Governor Judy Martz
 MG Prendergast

Chairman Furu opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. George Hageman seconded the motion and it was carried.

Jim went over the agenda for the opening ceremonies of the new Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery. Jim would be leaving the meeting early so he could get everything set up for the ceremony. Governor Martz, Senator Rehberg, and Bill Jayne with the State Cemetery Grants Program will be our speakers at the ceremony.

Jim announced that Donald Bogut from Kalispell will be the new Board member replacing Tot Mayer.

Jim discussed the budget report and the concerns he has about vacancy savings. We are expected to save \$17,000 in vacancy saving for personal services but because we have not had any turn over we've been unable to come up with the money. Jim will be asking the Department to see if we can get money from a special fund account with the Governor's budget office. Utility expenses are up this year. In the past we have cut travel, however, we are now locked into the leased vehicle program so there would not be a savings there.

The cemetery budget is strictly spending authority of special funds. The Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery contract begins in May.

Jim explained the outcome of the Legislative session. All that we asked for was approved to include making the Missoula Veterans Service Technician full time, spending authority for the two veterans cemeteries, computer and copier replacements.

The Martz budget decided to take \$12,000 out of our General Fund and put it in the Cemetery Fund to pay for Jim and Lee Ann's salaries. Starting July 1, 2001, we will be getting the entire amount of \$10.00 for new license plate fees instead of the \$6.00. Also if a Purple Heart plate is purchased and the veteran is rated 50% or higher, they get a free plate and \$10.00 still goes to us. If a 100% disabled veteran gets a Purple Heart plate it is still free, however, we do not get \$10.00.

Wales Davis has decided not to retire in July. The Kalispell office has been working comp-time as their office is unusually busy. Bill Hutton will be promoted to Grade 12 in September. Dan Shreeve's last day is May 28th. We will hire a new person for the Miles City office in July.

According to the stats, we should be bringing in more money than last year. Training this year will be in October and will include more computer training.

Jim will be meeting with the Legislative Interim Committee to study veterans needs over the next 2 years.

There are now 1169 veterans and spouses buried at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery. The Memorial Day Ceremony will be held at the Cemetery on May 30th which is the traditional memorial day holiday.

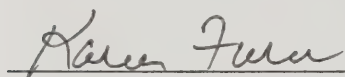
The Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery will open as soon as the inspection is complete. The equipment has been ordered and will be delivered when the cemetery opens. The contract will be in affect in May and we have contracted out the setting of the stones.

The new state map shows the location of the new cemetery. Highway signs have been erected on the highway showing the new cemetery.

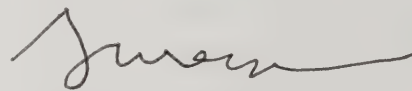
There has been some challenges with the construction. CTA will need to get the irrigation pipe set lower in the ditch.

Jim will be attending the NASDVA convention in Seattle in September. This was approved by the Board. Jim will also be attending the American Legion, VFW and DAV conventions.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45. The next meeting date is scheduled for October during training.



Karen Furu, Chairman



Thaddeus Mayer, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Karen Furu on October 19, 2001 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Karen Furu, Chairman
 Ruben McKinney, Member
 Johnny Buck, Member
 George Hageman, Member
 Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
 BG Randy Mosley, DMA
 Ray Read, American Legion
 Debra Dagget, VVA
 Sheri Heffelfinger, Legislative Branch
 MVAD employees

Chairman Karen Furu opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. Board member Don Bogut and MVAD employees Val Martin and Dorothy Jarosz were unable to attend. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Johnny Buck seconded the motion and it was carried.

For the Department of Military Affairs, BG Mosley reported that the National Guard is busy getting ready for their new mission after the terrorist attacks. Reserve components will be training for security at the Olympics.

The new Armed Forces building for the Federal employees is now complete. They will be moving in December 19, 2001. The State wing should be complete this spring or early summer. Design and construction is taking place for new armories in Kalispell, Great Falls, Bozeman and Dillon.

The Legislature did reduce agencies travel and personal services funds. Our travel budget was reduced by \$3985 and personal services was reduced \$7922 for both FY02 and FY03. Our personal services was already short \$17,000 due to vacancy savings. There are monies in the contingency fund that we were able to receive for last FY and will have to request again this FY. The Governor's Budget Office directed us to use License Plate monies for Jim and Lee Ann's salaries in the amount of \$12,000. Jim talked about the impact this would have on the License Plate fund. The Governor's Budget Office will be supportive of our needs and assured us that the salary money taken from the License Plate funds would be restored.

Jim is asking everyone for new proposals for the next legislative session. A question was asked and answered regarding travel funds for veterans outreach.

We now have two more accounts set up for the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery bringing us to five accounts. We have one license plate account, two donation accounts and two plot allowance accounts. We have a contract with Custer County for cemetery services and this contract will be renegotiated in FY03.

The personnel roster was discussed. The roster shows upgrades for years of experience, expert presentations and performance ratings. The roster also tracks years of state service for recognition. Jim has asked the employees for input on the PD's to make sure we are covering all areas.

The Federal VA is continuing to train the MVAD employees with TRIP training so they can eventually get involved with the development of claims. We are one of the first organizations to complete levels 1 and 2.

We supported the Office on Aging statewide workshops by providing information on veterans benefits. Video hearings will begin soon with the Hearing Officer in D.C. We will have 18 or 19 hearings.

Ruddy suggested that we have someone from DC come here for next year's training. The backlog of claims continues to grow. The VA continues to train more people to replace the retirement of experienced employees.

MVAD is still supporting the lease vehicle program. The cost for the leases continues to grow each year.

Sheri Heffelfinger, research analyst for the Legislature, talked about her research into veterans needs. She has been asked by some legislators to request a performance audit of the Board and MVAD to see where we can be more beneficial to the veterans. She will do research on outreach to the veterans, cost shifting between the agencies, grant writing, more FTE's, and possibly reorganizing the Board and MVAD in a way to better serve the veterans.

The Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison is now in its 14th year. Wayne Carlson attended a cemetery conference in Springfield Missouri this past summer. We continue to have challenges with part-time help for the cemetery.

The Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery is now open. To date we have buried 14 people. The new equipment has all been purchased. The Legislative Interim committee had one of their five meetings at the Cemetery.

There is an interest in a veterans cemetery in Missoula. Jim has attended several meetings in Missoula to discuss the many issues to include having enough money to operate the cemetery. The Federal VA grant monies will be there for start up but then it is up to the state to operate the cemetery. The biggest issue at this time is getting the land.

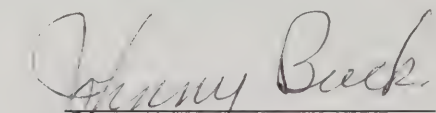
Jim did not attend the NASDVA conference in Seattle due to the terrorist attacks in September but plans on attending the convention this March in DC.

Election of officers was held. Johnny Buck is the new chairman, Ruben McKinney is Vice-Chairman and Donald Bogut is the new secretary.

Employees recognized for their upgrades and state service were: Bill Hutton, 5 years of service and upgrade to Grade 12, Sherri Stewart and Cheryl Heald for 20 years of service, Len Leibinger for 15 years of service, Wales Davis, Wayne Carlson and Herbie Woslager for 10 years of state service.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting date was scheduled for the first part of 2002.


Karen Furu, Chairman


Johnny Buck, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Johnny Buck on February 25, 2002 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Johnny Buck, Chairman
 Ruben McKinney, Member
 Karen Furu, Member
 George Hageman, Member
 Don Bogut, Member
 Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
 Mike Hampson, VVA
 Ray Read, American Legion
 Bill Willing, DMA
 Tom Cooper, Legislative Auditor
 Angie Grove, Legislative Auditor
 Larry Longfellow, VFW

Chairman Johnny Buck opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Ruben McKinney seconded the motion and it was carried.

For the Department of Military Affairs, Bill Willing thanked the Board for all they do in helping veterans.

Jim explained the Budget format for Don Bogut as a new Board member. This year we have had challenges with funding. The Legislature did reduce agency travel and personal services funds. Our travel budget for FY02 and 03 was reduced by \$3985 and personnel services was reduced \$7922 for both FY02 and FY03. Our personal services was already short \$17,000 due to vacancy savings and to date we are short \$28,000 in personnel services. There are monies in the vacancy savings fund that we were able to receive for last FY and will have to request again this FY. We were given monies for computers, however, we will not be buying them until we see what occurs with the vacancy savings fund. Jim was scheduled to attend the State Directors Convention in Seattle but the convention was cancelled due to the 9/11/02 incident. Bill Willing asked if we have had to cut travel and Jim explained that we used monies from other sources. Travel was cut years ago but Jim did not see the benefit in this. We also have fixed costs in the leased vehicles.

Jim explained the 3 revenue accounts for the State Veterans Cemetery program to include plot allowance, donations and license plates accounts. We still have to go to the legislature for spending authority. Unused General Fund monies are returned but the Special Revenue accounts are revolving and do not go away. This year is unique as a result of last session they approved a certain amount of salaries from the License Plate account. The amount is \$12,276 for FY02 and FY03. Jim and the Board have talked with the Governor and the Budget Director and expressed their concerns about restoring this money. Jim has concerns about the legislature taking more money in the following years. The passing of the Big Bill now provides the entire \$10 on the veterans license plates.

Jim discussed our new budget proposals and the Board approved them for submission.

We continue to have a challenge with the part-time groundskeeper position at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery. We are presently trying to upgrade the position to a Grade 9 and make it full-time. We will be asking for more spending authority in the cemetery accounts as we will be renegotiating the Custer County contract.

The President signed a new bill increasing bringing the plot allowance from \$150 to \$300. Jim asked the Board for their approval for charging \$300 for opening/closing fees. George moved, and Don seconded and it was passed. The personnel roster was discussed. The roster shows upgrades for years of experience, expert presentations and performance ratings. The roster also tracks years of state service for recognition.

Jim will be begin planning for the October training with hopes of getting some outside training. This will be expensive, however, we may be able to team up with other agencies to share the costs.

In the License Plate account, Jim mentioned that we would need at least \$160,000 per year in order to start up a new cemetery. We may be asking in the future for 100% grant monies for the cemetery in Helena to drill more water wells and increase burial area and enlarge maintenance building.

The waiting list for medical care for new patients continues to be an issue. There are more veterans than monies. Ruddy states there are 3000 claims on backlog. Jim will be hearing from the Secretary of the Federal VA at his conference next week in DC and will also be visiting our congressmen to talk about veterans issues. Ruddy will also be going to DC for the American Legion and will also visit with our congressmen.

The lease vehicle program continues to be a great program and we have superb support from the Motor Pool. We are scheduled to move to the new Armed Forces building out at the Fort at the end of April or the first of May. They have broken ground for the new Bozeman Armory in Belgrade and will hopefully break ground for the Kalispell Armory the following year.

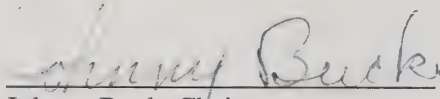
Tom Cooper and Angie Grove, Legislative Auditors, briefed the Board concerning the on going Legislative Performance Audit. They provided an overview of audit objectives which include the specific areas of interest to the Veterans Legislative Subcommittee. They plan to complete fieldwork by April and prepare their report by May. They further discussed the report process which will include review and comment by the Board. The report will then be presented to the Legislative Audit Committee and then the Veterans Legislative Subcommittee.

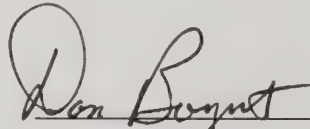
The Veterans Legislative Subcommittee has asked Jim to put together a veterans resource committee. Jim will contact all state and federal agencies who support veterans and set up a meeting on March 13, 2002.

There has been a challenge with veterans receiving the 100% property tax relief when rated with unemployability. State law only recognizes 100% disabled veterans as being entitled to the benefit. The Veterans Legislative Subcommittee will be drafting legislative changes.

The Board then discussed the details of proposed legislation changes concerning the Board and MVAD. After discussion, the Board directed Jim to prepare a response for consideration at the next Board meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m. Next meeting is scheduled for May, 2002


Johnny Buck, Chairman


Don Bogut, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Johnny Buck on June 3, 2002 at 8:00 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Johnny Buck, Chairman
 Ruben McKinney, Member
 Karen Furu, Member
 George Hageman, Member
 Don Bogut, Member
 Jim Jacobsen, Administrator
 Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer
 General Prendergast
 General Mosley

Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
 Mike Hampson, VVA
 Ray Read, American Legion
 Earl Vermillion, DAV
 Tom Cooper, Legislative Auditor
 Angie Grove, Legislative Auditor
 Dan Antionetti, VFW

Chairman Johnny Buck opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Karen Furu seconded the motion and it was carried.

For the Department of Military Affairs, General Prendergast was concerned about the State agencies not being able to move into the new building as there were challenges with getting the phones and state computer lines hooked up. On July 21, 2002 there will be a grand opening of the new building and he hopes the agencies will be moved in by then.

Jim received a letter from the Governor extending the Board terms to August 1, 2002 instead of June 1, 2002

Jim talked about our Budget dilemma. Our travel budget for FY02 and 03 was reduced by \$3985 and personnel services was reduced \$7922 for both FY02 and FY03. Our personal services was already short \$17,000 due to vacancy savings and with the yearly upgrades, we ended up short \$27,700. Department of Military was able to help us out so we didn't have to ask for vacancy savings monies. We are hoping to purchase 2 maybe 3 computers this FY.

Jim has requested more spending authority in the cemetery accounts for FY04 and FY05. We see no challenges in the cemetery budgets.

Each state agency has been asked to come up with a 3% and 10% budget reduction plan for our General Fund monies. Our 3% reduction amounted to \$21,514.26 and the 10% reduction amounted to \$71,715.20. The 3% reduction would reduce employee hours and the 10% would eliminate 2 FTE's and close one veteran field office with the remainder coming out of the operating budget. On the priority sheet, we came in at 4th out of 7. Jim will be attending the DAV, VFW and American Legion conventions this month. Governor Martz will also be attending the conventions and Jim will be talking with her about out budget cuts. Johnny Buck will also be speaking with Governor Martz about the budget cuts.

The status for the submitted EPP proposals is as follows:

Restore General Fund Support for State Cemetery Adm. Costs	Pending
Restore Travel Monies	Denied
Move Funding for Kalispell and Bozeman	Denied
Computer and Copier Purchases	Denied
Spending Authority for Cemetery	Approved

The next legislation reduction plan for the next bi-annium is 5% which is \$34,708
 Jim explained the License Plate account. We use to get \$6.00 on each plate sold and now we get the full \$10.00. We now have approximately \$441,000 in the cemetery bank account.

General Prendergast talked about the budget cuts coming down from the budget office. We all need to get together and come up with a plan of action. There is an important committee meeting coming up the end of June. Veterans organizations need to get together and support all veterans. General Prendergast offered the veterans the use of the Armed Forces Reserve Center.

Jim and the Board explained the draft audit report to Tom Cooper and Angie Grove. The Audit recommendations were :

- *Revise statue to reflect cemetery oversight by the Board/MVAD
- *Upgrade management information systems and communications equipment
- *Evaluate staff travel efficiency
- *Establish a comprehensive approach for claims processing quality control.
- *Establish policy for key activities including:
 - Records Management
 - Claims Evidence Standards
 - Outreach Materials Standards
 - Home Visits
 - Staff Overtime
 - Type of Facilities Used for Satellite Visits
- *Review and revise technician and officer classifications to reflect current duties and responsibilities.
- *Strengthen Staff Training
- *Establish a workload evaluation methodology to assess staff activities and work priorities.

Most of the recommendations are budget related.

Johnny signed the preliminary bill draft memo (LC 5551) as there were no changes. Jim recommends that we support SJR 5.

Jim will be scheduling the next Montana Veteran Resource Council meeting in July that will be held at Fort Harrison.

The vacancy announcement for Jim's replacement is out on the system and closes on the 20th. The position description has been rewritten and the position has been upgraded to Grade 18. The recommendation is to have one Board member evaluate the application then have all the Board members do the interviews.

Representative Hal Jacobson attended the Board meeting as he has some questions about starting a memorial in Helena on the Capitol grounds for Montana veterans. There were questions about how this would be funded.

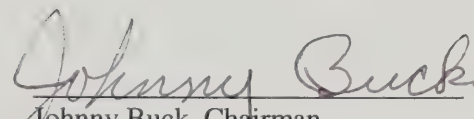
The next training session is scheduled for September 30, 2002 through October 4, 2002.

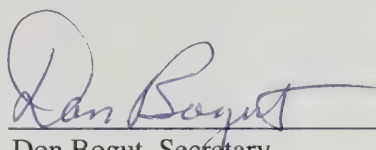
Kalispell moved into another office within the Armory with windows and more space.

We hired a new part-time cemetery groundskeeper. Jim hopes to make this a full-time position in the future as Missoula is still looking for land to build a veterans cemetery.

We will be having Memorial Day ceremonies at both cemeteries. MSVC will hold theirs on the traditional day and EMSVC will hold theirs on the holiday.

Jim will be attending the American Legion, DAV and VFW conventions in June. Jim will also visit the offices while traveling to and from these conventions to say "thanks" and "good-bye".


Johnny Buck, Chairman


Don Bogut, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Johnny Buck on July 25, 2002 at 1:30 p.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Johnny Buck, Chairman
Ruben McKinney, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Don Bogut, Member
Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer
Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
Gary White, American Legion
Carl Nordberg, American Legion
Earl Vermillion, DAV

Dan Antonietti, VFW
Earl Vermillion, DAV
Hal Manson, American Legion
Ray Read, American Legion
Herbie Woslager, Veterans Affairs
Dan Cockran, VVA
Mike Hampson, VVA
Dewey Hahlbohm, VVA
Alan Armstrong, VVA

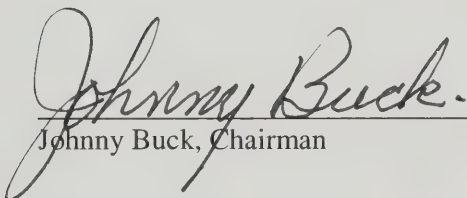
Chairman Johnny Buck opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Karen Furu seconded the motion and it was carried.

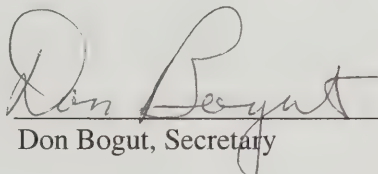
The Board spent the morning interviewing four candidates for the Administrator position. Joe Foster was the chosen applicant and will begin his duties in September.

Ruddy Reilly talked about the diabetes cases are way up. Ruddy would like to have one day classes with our Service Officers and Veteran Technicians. Ruddy also mentioned that 70% of the claims pending are ours.

The rest of the Board meeting was spent discussing testimony for the State Administrative Interim Committee hearing to be held the next day.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m. The next meeting date is scheduled for January, 2003 during the Legislative session.


Johnny Buck, Chairman


Don Bogut, Secretary

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Don Bogut on January 16, 2003 at 8:30 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Don Bogut, Chairman
Karen Furu, Member
Don Kettner, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
BG Randy Mosley, DMA
Gary White, American Legion
Larry Longfellow, VFW
Mike Hampson, VVA
Art Heffelfinger, VVA

Chairman Don Bogut opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. Board members Ruben McKinney and Ray Tindall were unable to attend. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Don Kettner moved and Karen Furu seconded the motion and it was carried.

For the Department of Military Affairs, BG Mosley reported that the National Guard's primary mission is the deployment. DMA is making sure the soldiers are ready. They could be sent overseas or sent to cover those who will be going overseas.

For the budget report, Joe told everyone that our General Fund budget is down from \$717,000 to \$680,000 due to across the board agency cuts and special session. The operations budget is very short as we could not get out of the leased vehicle program until this July, and Personnel expenses are being paid out of the Cemetery Fund versus laying off employees. The General Fund budgets for FY04 and FY05 are not looking any better.

Art Heffelfinger announced that some private citizens want to give us a \$5000 grant to be used specifically for veterans outreach and not to replace General Fund monies. Art further explained that the money would be used for outreach on the reservations, homeless veterans and their families etc. Don Bogut asked Art if the Board would need to put together a report about where the money was spent and Art said he would leave this to Joe's discretion and that the donors wanted to remain anonymous.

Joe discussed the issue of the Service Officer's and the Service Technician's low pay. The average employee has 14 years experience which is very remarkable. The Missoula technician had her hours reduced back to .8 and the Butte technician's hours were reduced to .6. Karen asked about pay raises and Joe explained that the Service Officers and the Technicians do the same amount of work, the only difference being is that the Service Officers travel and supervise. Joe plans on getting everyone up to the same level which would require a new draft of their position descriptions, which we have, but are unable to implement due to the budget cuts.

This last year the annual training was held here in Helena with the Service Officers. Ruddy has been trying for years to get someone to come do a training session on Argument and Persuasion. We had a professor from the University of Montana volunteer his time to talk to the Service Officers. The Professor agreed to come back and train the Service Technicians. Ruddy said this kind of training is important as it will get the claims rated faster. Ruddy was concerned about training monies for FY04 and FY05 and Joe said it wasn't looking good at this time. Bonnie Curran has taken the correspondence course and Ruddy would like to send Sherry Stewart to the American Legion training in Indianapolis.

Don Kettner asked about the hiring process and Mike Hampson asked about the disability ratings in the hiring process. It was explained to them that we follow state procedure when hiring so everything is legal.

The Legislative committee for the Department of Military Affairs met here this week starting with a tour of the new building and then up to Malmstrom for another tour and presentations followed.

The veterans license plate program is still going strong. They are now colorizing the emblems of the different branches on the plates. Art asked about being able to draw interest on the license plate monies and was there any restrictions on how the money was spent. Joe said he is looking into the interest monies and that cemetery monies could only be spent on cemetery issues.

We are looking to do some expansion at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery. Joe would like the Boards approval to extend the maintenance building to include bathrooms, pave some more roads and add more sprinkling systems. Don moved and Karen seconded.

We are experiencing some problems at the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery. Joe talked with the County Commissioners and they agreed that there are some problems. We have a contract with Custer County that is up for renewal July 1, 2003. If things don't get any better then we may look at other options.

There was discussion about not charging the spouses of veterans for the plot allowance of \$300. There would be a financial impact on the cemeteries. The national cemeteries do charge the spouses. The Board has left this up to Joe to make a decision.

Missoula veterans are still looking for a location to have a veterans cemetery there. There was also talk about putting a veterans cemetery on one of the reservations and also Poplar, Scobey, Wolf Point and Circle. Joe explained that land must be deeded to the State and have legislative support. Joe doesn't see where we could support a 4th cemetery.

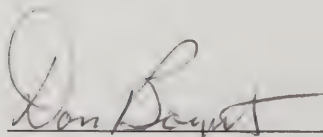
The Federal VA hosted a Tribal Veterans Representative (TVR) training. 6 out of 7 tribal reservations attended. Joe also attended all the training. TVR's are a liaison between our Service Offices and the reservations.

Joe will be assisting Allan Erickson is getting some grants through FEMA for the Homeless Veterans Stand Downs.

Joe talked about the Senate Bill 4 and 50 explaining that it has been a painful and negative process. Joe believes the future will be positive. Whatever comes out of this will be better for everyone. We've been challenged. Joe appreciates what have been done and said we must now go forward. Joe and Art will be working on a compromise on the two bills.

Discussion regarding Board "Secretary" versus "Vice Chairman" took place with resolution to take place at the next Board meeting. At that time, based upon pending legislative actions, this issue will be resolved.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting date was tentatively scheduled for the 14th and 15th of April.


Don Bogut, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Don Bogut on April 21, 2003 at 8:30 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Don Bogut, Chairman
Ray Tindall, Member
Don Kettner, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
General Prendergast, DMA
Gary White, American Legion
Larry Longfellow, VFW

Chairman Don Bogut opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. Board members Ruben McKinney and Karen Furu were unable to attend. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Don Kettner moved and Ray Tindall seconded the motion and it was carried.

For the Department of Military Affairs, MG Prendergast applauded Joe for his hard work with the Legislature. This was a very important veteran legislative session.

For the budget report, Joe gave an overview of our General Fund budget. Our 2002 budget was \$723,000 and we have requested \$747,000 for FY03 but were shut down due to across the board agency cuts and special session. We continue to pay personnel expenses out of the Cemetery Fund versus laying off employees. The General Fund budgets for FY04 and FY05 are still being decided by the Legislature.

On the personnel side, Bonnie Curran has been upgraded from a grade 10 to a grade 11. Ruddy Reilly will have 35 years of employment with this division in July, 2003.

Joe is working on having our employees attend National and Regional VA training sessions. This would all depend on SB 401 which has passed and is waiting for the Governor's signature. With the passing of this bill, we would like to hire 3 new service officers. One service office would be located here in Helena but would travel throughout the state and service veterans and would also apply for grants for veterans' services. The other two would be located in Glasgow and Havre. Currently we are lodging our employees who come for training at the Fort to save money. We will also be looking at using Teleconferencing for our new twenty member Board. The new Board will be in effect January 1, 2004. Don Kettner talked about getting the new Board members familiar with the Board by-laws.

We will be holding another training session June 16th thru June 20th. The Tribal Veterans Representatives will be here at the same time and will be included in the training.

The License Plate program for the cemeteries is doing well. We expect to exceed last year's and donations will be close to last year. The plot allowance account will exceed the last 4 years as the Veterans Administration is now paying \$300 for plot allowance. Congress is talking about raising the plot allowance to \$500. Joe would like to build a bathroom at the cemetery, extend the maintenance building and repair the Memorial Wall. Wayne will be checking with the contractors for a price. The 100% federal monies will not cover these items.

Last Legislative session a bill was passed establishing the Montana Veterans Burial fund. Funds were and are being donated to help defray the costs of burying unclaimed veterans remains. This group would also like to put in a reflection pond, establish an eternal flame and build a Columbarium. Joe spoke with the group and asked them to wait until he spoke with the Board of Veterans Affairs and the Cemetery Advisory Committee, as they would have to approve it.

We now have 50 veterans buried at the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery. The contract with Custer County ends June 30, 2003 and we will not be renewing it. Joe recently made a trip to Miles City to visit the cemetery and found that the cemetery was not being properly taken care of. John Horn briefed Joe on the process of contracting out for services at the Cemetery. We will be getting bids on a Cemetery Sexton and a maintenance person. The bidding process closes in June and we should have our new contractors on the job starting July 1, 2003.

Land for the new Western Montana State Veterans cemetery has now been identified. The land is owned by DNRC and they are willing to transfer the land to us to be used for a veterans cemetery. Joe looked at the land and said it is very nice. Bill Jayne, from the cemetery grants program, will be out to view the land in June. There is still about a 3 year waiting period for the 100% federal start up monies for construction and equipment. Joe talked about doing smaller cemeteries throughout the state. We would establish veteran cemeteries in existing cemeteries. They would already have a road network, irrigation and a maintenance program. Billings and Polson have already expressed interest in this idea

For the Legislative report, Joe talked about SB 435 which is a bill requiring permanent registration on vehicles over 11 years old. This would have a significant impact on our veterans license plates. Last year there were approximately 16,500 plates sold and of these 9,100 were 11 years or older. This bill failed, however, HB 559 was brought to life and the language from SB 435 was in it. This bill would give us 20 cents per plate but we wouldn't see the money until 2007.

SB 65 is a bill revising the property tax exemption, vehicle registration and special license plates provisions for eligible veterans and their surviving spouses. This will revise the income limits for the veteran property tax exemption and amend language related to disabled veterans entitled to receive compensation from the VA at the 100% rate.

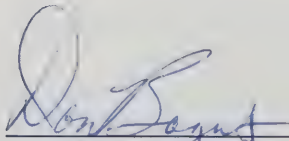
SB 81 is an act authorizing the Superintendent of Public Instruction to award an honorary high school diploma to certain veterans who did not receive a diploma due to military service.

Joe is working with the Montana/Wyoming Tribal Council. Joe will be attending their committee meetings in Billings. Joe will also be attending the "Policy Academy on Homelessness" conference in Chicago in mid May. This program is sponsored by HUD, Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs and all federal agencies.

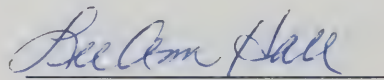
There is a new lottery ticket program to benefits veterans. Mort Walker, author of Beetle Bailey comic strip, will be autographing posters for sale. The proceeds will possibly go to the food pantry, veteran stand downs, veterans cemetery. There is also talk about building a home at Fort Harrison for families to stay in while their relatives are in the hospital.

Don Bogut discussed revising the Board by-laws. Don Kettner volunteered to review them and suggested the Board make a date to get together to adopt the new by-laws.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m. The next meeting date has been scheduled for June 17, 2003.



Don Bogut, Chairman



Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs
MINUTES

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Don Bogut on June 17, 2003 at 1:00 p.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Don Bogut, Chairman
Don Kettner, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Ray Tindall, Member
Charles VanGorden, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Gary White, American Legion
Larry Longfellow, VFW
Wayne Carlson, Cemetery Sexton

Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
Mike Hampson, VVA
Art Heffelfinger, VVA
Allen Armstrong, VVA
Steven Hilton, Marine Corps League
Robin Steffan, MVBF
CJ Lassila, MVBF
Mike Hossfeld, MVBF
Robert Morton, Peccia & Assoc.

Chairman Don Bogut opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Don Kettner accepted the minutes be approved and Ray Tindall seconded the motion and it was carried.

Mike Hossfeld with the Montana Veterans Burial Fund (MVBF) talked to the Board about building a columbarium and memorial complex at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery. There would be no cost for construction, however, when the columbarium is up and running the cost to operate it would shift to the cemetery program. Mr. Hossfeld presented a copy of the plans for everyone to view and then asked if the Board had any questions. Chairman Don Bogut was concerned that the building of the columbarium wasn't brought before the Board until today. Mr. Hossfeld stated that this was the first time the Board has met since the plans were finished. Don Kettner asked if the MVBF has raised any money yet and wanted to know if they had 501(C)(3) status and Mr. Hossfeld stated they would be under the umbrella of the MVBF 501(C)(3) status and that every dollar donated to the fund would be used for the columbarium. The MVBF does have donations in the way of labor. Don Kettner asked how much this project would cost and Mr. Hossfeld said it would be about \$70,000. A question was raised as to where did they come up with a \$400,000 figure and the answer being that with all the construction and materials etc, the overall cost would be \$400,000 but after all the donations of labor etc the costs would then be reduced to the \$70,000 figure. The upkeep costs will definitely be a factor. Mr. Robert Morton, of Peccia & Associates (who designed the project) stated that maintenance could cost between \$5,000 to \$20,000 annually.

Karen Furu wanted to know how it was determined that a columbarium was needed and Mr. Hossfeld said that Steve Yeakle, head of the Funeral Home Association of Montana, told him that funeral homes want to be able to offer this service to their clients and that cremation has increased in Western Montana by 60%. Don Bogut feels the Board was blindsided and wished the Board would have been informed early on. He feels this would be a nice addition to the veterans cemetery and the families would have a choice of burying their loved ones above or below, however, the ongoing maintenance of the columbarium project is a big issue with no answers as to where this money would come from. The Board made a decision to take this to Executive Session.

American Legion thinks the columbarium is a good idea, however they do have concerns about the ongoing maintenance resultant of the memorial portion (reflection pool, waterfall, pumping plant and external flame). Larry Longfellow will bring this issue to the VFW convention for

comment. Marine Corps League wanted to know what would happen if the Board decided against it and Robin Steffan stated that the MVBF had other options but declined to say where.

Moving on to other business, Ray Tindall moved to adopt the new Board by-laws as written and Don Kettner seconded the motion, it was carried.

The Liberty House fund raising effort was kicked off on June 6th at the VA. Secretary of State Bob Brown was the keynote speaker.

The Tribal Veterans Representatives are having their training this week here in Helena. MVAD employees were also at the training. Cheryl Heald designed the emblem for the Tribal Rep bags and this emblem has been adopted nationally.

\$150,000 has been appropriated by the Legislature for start up costs for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula. Joe and Wayne will be going to Missoula to meet with Bill Jayne, Cemetery Program and Grants Administrator. At this time Joe will discuss the potential of putting a columbarium in the new cemetery.

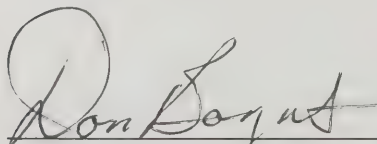
Joe has sent letters out to the new State Administration and Veterans Affairs Interim Committee introducing MVAD. Joe's plan is to send them letters regularly keeping them informed on our progress.

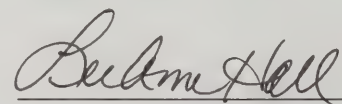
Joe has been conversing with Target for grant money to help with the standdowns in Billings and Libby.

We are planning on hiring our two positions in Bozeman in July. Joe will have an update at the October Board meeting on the Great Falls position and the other new positions. Joe wants one of the new Service Officer positions to do outreach on the highline and this will also cover the reservations. The other position would be someone to support the Grants program and would also operate the mobile veteran service office.

To the credit of Ruddy Reilly, there is a new VA policy at Fort Harrison that we receive a copy of the veterans C&P hearing notification so we can then fax it to our supporting service offices and they can then contact the veteran to make sure they also got a copy of the hearing notification.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m. The next meeting date has been scheduled for October, 2003.


Don Bogut, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs MINUTES

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Don Bogut on October 15, 2003 at 8:30 a.m. in Helena with the following individuals present:

Don Bogut, Chairman
Don Kettner, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Charles VanGorden, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Gary White, American Legion
Larry Longfellow, VFW
Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager

Bob Schwegel, VFW
Jean Cramer, DAV
Mike Hankins, UVC
Allen Armstrong, VVA
Steven Hilton, Marine Corps League
Robin Steffan, MVBF
CJ Lassila, MVBF

Chairman Don Bogut opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Don Kettner moved the minutes be approved and Karen Furu seconded the motion and it was carried.

We now have a contract with the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) for training. Our first training session with them is this week. In addition to the Montana Veterans Affairs Division (MVAD) employees, the DAV, American Legion, VFW and VVA were also invited to attend the training session. This is a first time for this level of training. Cheryl Heald and Len Leibinger came to training a day early to review claims with the NVSLP trainers. Sherry Stewart and Lori Perkio will be attending VFW training in Washington, DC in January. We would also like to send our Service Officers for training with the American Legion and Military Order of the Purple Heart. This level of training is necessary for our service officer to be accredited and to comply with the audit.

Our Great Falls Service Officer and our Butte Veteran Service Technician positions are vacant at this time. We lost our Great Falls position during the last legislature but will transfer the Butte Service Officer position to the Great Falls office in the interim until January 2004 to maximize services to the State's largest veteran populated region. We anticipate hiring the Great Falls position in November. We will announce the Butte and Havre positions in December and hope to have them hired in January 2004.

We will be buying 9 new laptop computers and 5 new desktop computers for the offices along with carrying cases and portable printers for the laptops. The contract with NVLSP also provided the division with CD's with veteran reference material and VA forms on them.

Joe will be searching for new office space in Great Falls and Havre. The National Guard in Havre has an annex that is empty and we are welcome to use it.

Joe has been doing some research for the Veteran Mobile Service Office. Talked with vendor to get cost estimates. We will purchase this next fiscal year when we have the money as the cost estimates came in around \$80,000.

Rumors has been floating around about Target Stores being anti-veteran. Joe said there is no truth to those rumors. In fact, Joe received \$1000 from the Target store in Helena for the veterans' stand down in Libby. Joe presented the check to Allen Erickson, who is in charge of the stand down. This \$1000 donation came from the seven Target stores in Montana and three in Spokane, Washington.

Joe also presented the VVA with a check for \$1000 for the veterans stand down in Billings to purchase sleeping bags, blankets, etc. This money was provide from the MVAD operations budget.

We now have over 1500 veterans and spouses buried at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery and 61 veterans and spouses buried at the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery. Currently we have approximately \$480,000 in the cemetery account. We have just requested from the Department of Military Affairs \$100,000 in spending authority to extend the maintenance building, put in a public restroom, and restore the directory sign and memorial wall. We also need to make the sidewalks handicap accessible. We have \$17,000 in grant monies left in the Miles City cemetery account which we will use to fix the irrigation system's sump. Joe has received verbal approval from Bill Jayne with the States Cemetery Grants Program in Washington, DC on the preapplication requesting construction of the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula. As soon as Joe gets the hard copy on the approval, he will take that along with the survey (to be completed) to the Governor to get the land transferred to us from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. We have \$150,000 of spending authority granted by the past legislature to do the preliminary work. This money will be reimbursed once we get the grant.

In January 2004 we will be getting approximately \$279,000 earmarked for veterans services. This money will be used to hire 3 new employees and expand division operations. In December, our division will move into the new pay system called Broadband Plan. At this time we will be upgrading our Veteran Service Technicians to Veteran Service Officers and restructuring the division's organizational management scheme. This also satisfies audit recommendations.

Joe briefed the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee on our budget for FY04. A basic rundown of how the monies will be spent is as follows:

\$60,000	Hire three employees in January 2004
\$25,000	Broadband Plan implementation.
\$50,000	Staff training
\$30,000	Office Technology
\$20,000	Outreach and per diem for Board meetings
\$ 5,000	Contracts/Grants
\$ 6,000	Lease 2 more state vehicles
\$ 9,000	Establish and furnish 2 new offices, one in Helena and one in Havre
\$ 4,000	Office relocation in Great Falls

The columbarium/memorial complex issue was revisited with Montana Veterans Burial Fund members. Robin Steffan talked about the total cost being \$400,000 and that would include the columbarium, eternal flame, reflection pool, landscaping etc. Everyone decided that the Montana Veterans Burial Fund should come up with a new and more comprehensive proposal for the Board, limited to strictly a columbarium and plaza. We also need to see if the columbarium can be legally built with donated labor, or do we have to have solicit bids.

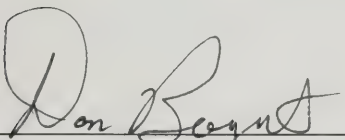
Gary White stated that he is in contact with the Worcester Wreath company, and they are going to donate 100 Christmas wreaths to the Miles City Cemetery.

Allan Armstrong talked about getting an aerial picture of the cemetery. He would like to use this picture to show where all the donated trees are in the cemetery, and who donated them.

Steve Hilton with the Marine Corps League had some concerns about consolidating all the veterans service organizations to help with the Liberty House. It was explained that the Liberty House will soon have a Board of its own that will consist of business owners from the community, the general public and veterans.

Johnny Buck's son and daughter came to the Board meeting and were presented with the Freedom Award plaque in memory of Johnny.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 p.m. The next meeting date has been scheduled for January 2004, in conjunction with the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee meeting.


Don Bogut, Chairman
Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING MINUTES

- January 22, 2004 -

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Bogut on January 22, 2004 in Helena, with the following individuals present:

Don Bogut, Chairman
Don Kettner, Vice-Chairman
Karen Furu, Member
Ray Tindall, Member
Charles VanGorden, Member
Bob Pavlovich, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member
Jim Heffernan, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Ed Sperry, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Maj. Gen. John E. Prendergast, Member

Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
Kelly Williams, Member
Lee Logan, Member
Lori Ryan, Member
Larry Longfellow, VFW, guest
Gary White, American Legion, guest
Betsy Allen, Sen. Burns
Holly Luck, Sen. Baucus.
Jessica Cameran, Rep. Rehberg
W. Lee Smith, guest
James Birtcher, guest
Angelo Bianco, guest
Mike Hampson, VVA, guest

Chairman Don Bogut opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Don Kettner approved the minutes and Karen Furu seconded the motion, motion was carried.

This being the first Board meeting under the reorganization, Joe Foster explained the division's organizational chart and gave an in-depth overview of the Veterans' Affairs Division. Key to the division is the creation of a new veterans' service office in Havre, increasing from eight statewide service offices to nine. The veterans' service officer workforce will increase from the current quantity of 13 to 17 once all positions are filled. The Havre position is expected to be on board in March, and will service the four reservations along the "Hi-Line." This will result in reducing both the Great Falls and Miles City veterans' service offices' outreach areas of responsibility.

We now have two veteran cemeteries up and running. The cemeteries are located in Helena and Miles City. We have preliminary approval to start a 3rd cemetery in Missoula. This will be a \$2 million project.

The reorganization includes three new Regional Service Officers. Those selected were: Cheryl Heald - Eastern Region, includes the Miles City, Billings and Bozeman offices. Patricia Crowley - Central Region, includes the Helena, Havre and Great Falls offices. Len Leibinger - Western Region, includes the Butte, Missoula and Kalispell offices. Later this fiscal year or early next, the division will purchase a mobile service office van which will travel around the state on a programmed basis servicing veterans.

We just purchased nine laptop computers (notebooks) for the service offices' outreach programs, and eight new desktop computers to attain the necessary hardware to interface with the federal Veterans' Administration's information management network. The

interface capability itself will be very expensive - approx. \$60,000 per year - but will allow for much more efficient service for the veterans served. We will also be purchasing printers for all the offices. All purchases include outfitting the Havre office. The major technology purchase allowing interface with the federal Veterans' Administration information management network will be next fiscal year.

We were given permission to use Montana Army National Guard office space in Havre. The Great Falls office recently moved to a bigger office within the same building. Our Bozeman office has moved to the new Gallatin Readiness Center in Belgrade, and the two new employees are doing a great job.

In January we will be sending Lori Perkio (Butte) and Sherri Stewart (Kalispell) to VFW Service Officer accreditation training; and in March, Jane Geraldts (Kalispell), Anna Cleek (Belgrade) and David Capps (Great Falls) will go to American Legion Service Officer accreditation training. In June, the National Veterans' Legal Services Program (NVLSP) will again come to Helena to conduct a training session with all our service officers.

Len Leibinger, Cheryl Heald and Patricia Crowley, our Regional Service Officers, are working closely with the VA to figure out why Montana has what may be the highest claims appeal rate in the nation. We will determine what both the federal VA and the division can do better/differently to remedy this situation. This will be an ongoing process and we are committed to working together to identify and resolve the issues.

We have revamped the offices' statistical reporting. Joe explained that this report is a great tool to see specifically where the veterans are being served and the financial result. Each month the offices provide statistics that are transferred to a master listing. The master statistics report shows the number of veterans served, where they live, the type of claim, and the monetary amounts the veterans will be receiving. The total amount of federal VA benefits Montana veterans receive directly due to Montana Veterans' Affairs Division service officer work is approx. \$59 million annually. However, with the new tracking system, upgraded office equipment and additional service officer personnel, we fully expect to double this amount by the year 2007.

Joe talked about the "veteran" license plates. We now have a balance of approximately \$500,000 in the cemetery special revenue account. This money will be needed to get the Missoula cemetery up and running and keep the program solvent if legislation is passed which negatively impacts the license plate program. A bill was introduced last legislative session that would mandate permanent registration for light vehicles 11 years old or older. Remarkably, of the approx. 16,500 veteran license plates sold last year, 9500 were on vehicles that old - which would mean losing the cemetery program revenue from those plates once permanently registered. 9500 plates equates to a loss of \$95,000. Various cemetery program fundraising ideas were discussed. Bob Pavlovich mentioned that we should put donation envelopes in the Funeral Homes. Joe committed to developing a tri-fold brochure that could be placed at funeral homes, provided to veterans service organizations, and anyone else interested in distributing the tri-folds.

For the budget report, Joe explained what we have been doing with the veterans' services special revenue that became available Jan. 1, 2004:

- 3 -

- + We were able to keep two employees (otherwise they would have been RIFed due to lack of funds)
- + Three additional employees will be hired (a second service officer in Butte and Great Falls, and a veterans' service officer to manage the mobile veterans' service van)
- + Moved our staff into the Broadband personnel management system.
- + More staff training
- + Purchased computer hardware and software technology
- + Enhance outreach operations
- + Fund contracts and grants
- + Lease two additional state vehicles (Butte and Havre)
- + Staff two new offices (Havre and the mobile veterans service position)

In FY05, Joe will be looking into other veteran service and benefit programs that may be a good, valid investment of the veterans' services special revenue.

There is now a Liberty House Foundation Board. The members are from all over the state of Montana. The veterans' service organizations are looking nationally for funding support for the structure.

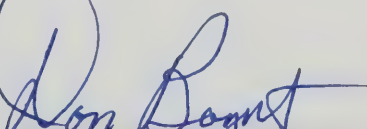

Joe discussed some Legislative initiatives; including - authorization to accept and spend the anticipated \$2 million grant for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery, and requesting an additional fulltime equivalent (FTE) to operate the Eastern Montana State Veterans' Cemetery (currently the services are contracted and Joe thinks we can save money and ensure long-term stability in the position by having an FTE versus the current contract arrangement).

We are currently fixing the irrigation pump's sump at the Miles City cemetery. This is probably the final project utilizing the \$1.5 million grant from the cemetery grants program. In the spring, we will be extending the maintenance building, adding an external restroom, and fixing the memorial wall at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison. The approximate cost of this project is \$90,000, which will be financed out of the state cemetery special revenue account.

Desert Storm veteran, Lee Smith, read a letter he wrote about the VA reducing psychiatric treatment for PTSD veterans. He stated that this could be a big issue with soldiers coming back from Iraq. The Congressional delegates on the Board committed to look into this and report back to the Board at the next meeting.

Joe met with Gail Gray, Department of Public Health and Human Services, and Bill Slaughter and Mike Mahoney, Department of Corrections; to discuss our commitment to service incarcerated veterans at the Montana State Prison. The prison will be supported from the Butte veterans' service office once the new hire is ready for outreach operations.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting date has been scheduled for April 21, 2004 in Billings.


Don Bogut, Chairman
Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING MINUTES

- April 21, 2004 -

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Bogut on April 21, 2004 in Billings, with the following individuals present:

Don Bogut, Chairman
Don Kettner, Vice-Chairman
Ray Tindall, Member
Charles VanGorden, Member
Bob Pavlovich, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member
Lee Logan, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Ed Sperry, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Kelly Williams, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
Ruddy Reilly, Senior Service Officer

Sharon Pearson, Sen. Burns Office
Liz Chang, Sen. Baucus
Jeff Gerard, Rep. Rehberg
Angelo Bianco, guest
Joe Walsh, guest
Dave Peterson, Disabled American Veterans
Cheryl Heald, Montana Veterans Affairs Division
Bob Phillips, Billings Veterans Center
Sylvia Beals, American Legion
Bob Beals, American Legion
Luke Petriccione, Veterans Education and Training,
MSU Northern

Chairman Don Bogut opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Chairman made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Vice-Chairman Don Kettner approved the minutes and Charles VanGorden seconded the motion, motion was carried.

The division's operational status was discussed. Joe passed out an updated map of the veterans' service offices revised areas of operation - due to the addition of a new Havre office. He announced that Ms. Jackie Williams is the newly hired Benefits and Administrative Support Technician. We have scheduled interviews for four applicants for the Mobile Veterans Service Officer and four applicants for the Havre Veteran Service Officer. These positions are expected to be filled by the end of May. At that time, all of the division's 22 authorized positions will be filled.

In January we sent Lori Perkio (Butte) and Sherri Stewart (Kalispell) to VFW Service Officer accreditation training; and in March, Jane Gerald (Kalispell), Anna Cleek (Belgrade) and David Capps (Great Falls) went to American Legion Service Officer accreditation training. Chris Crauthers (Butte) will attend the American Legion Service Officer accreditation training in July. These accreditation training courses, regardless of the organization sponsoring it, is recognized by all Congressionally-Mandated veteran service organizations. In June, approx. 10 of the division's service officers will receive certification training from the Fort Harrison VA Center, and the National Veterans' Legal Services Program will again come to Helena to conduct a training session with all our service officers. Lori Perkio and Brenda Briggs (Bozeman) have just completed supervisory training (phase 1) in Helena. Phase II of the training will take place in July, 2004. Joe expects that all of the division's supervisors will ultimately go through this type training.

The Fort Harrison VA Center is planning to build a new structure that will house the Veterans Benefits Administration portion of its operation. Groundbreaking is scheduled for September 2004. Our Helena veterans service office (located at the VA Center) will move to the new building once completed.

The state veterans cemetery program was reported by Joe. We have preliminary approval to start a third state veterans cemetery in Missoula. This will be a \$2 million project. Joe reported that the "veteran" license plate sales at this time are exceeding last year's by 800+. We now have a balance of approximately \$538,000 in the cemetery special revenue account. This money will be needed to get the Missoula cemetery up and running, and keep the program solvent if legislation is passed which negatively impacts the license plate program. Governor Martz has scheduled May 20 for the land transfer signing ceremony (Executive Order). Once the Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation land is transferred to the Dept. of Military Affairs, we will commit up to \$150,000 for design and environmental studies work to support application requirements for the anticipated federal VA grant. This amount was authorized by the 2003 Legislature. Once we receive the grant, the \$150,000 will be reimbursed us. Joe reported that at the National Association of State Directors for Veterans Affairs conference recently held in Washington, D.C., the National Cemetery Program Manager showed the Missoula cemetery on the Federal Cemetery Grants Program's priority listing. To ensure continued participation of the Missoula-area veterans who have worked so hard to identify and attain the land, Joe requested a "design advisory team" from their organization to participate in the design process, once initiated. A four-member team has been identified by Board member Charlie Crookshanks.

Our contracted services for the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery is working out very well. After this Board meeting, Joe will travel to Miles City for that cemetery's advisory committee meeting. Joe stated that a major funeral home in Miles City has reported approximately 1000 "reservations" for the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery. He is going to check on that while in Miles City.

The Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison is starting two construction projects. The first will be the extension of the maintenance building, addition of an external restroom, and transition of the electric heating system to propane. A walk-through for potential bidders is planned in the next couple of weeks. The cost of this project is expected to be approx. \$70,000 and should be completed by mid-summer. The next construction project will be the refurbishment of the memorial wall and entrance directory, widening the north/south sidewalk to the memorial plaza, and installation of three new flagpoles. This project will cost about \$40,000 and will begin in July with expected completion in early Fall. A columbarium is also planned for the Montana State Veterans Cemetery, though it will not be pursued until the Missoula cemetery fiscal processes are "squared away." Joe has attained preapplication approval from the National Cemetery Program for a \$150,000 grant to build the columbarium. A columbarium is planned for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula.

A question was asked about the Bill that was introduced last Legislative Session that would mandate permanent registration for light vehicles 11 years old or older. Joe recommended that rather than fight the Bill, the Board and division work with the Bill's sponsor to get the bill modified so the veteran license plate program and the veterans' services special revenue account are not adversely affected. This was the approach taken last Session with positive results in the final Bill language. The Bill ultimately did not pass so it became a moot issue. However, this type Legislation is expected to emerge again this upcoming Session and we must be prepared to address it.

Joe talked about the new cemetery license plate posters that will go in all the county courthouses. He also mentioned the new tri-fold brochures that are now in the design stage. There have been requests through the years from veterans organizations regarding uniforms for state veteran cemetery personnel. In recognition of the enhanced professional appearance and ease of identifying our personnel at the cemetery, the division has purchased coats, shirts and hats with graphics and wording specific to each cemetery. Joe had the Miles City clothing with him and showed them to the Board and attendees.

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Board members Don Kettner and Harvey Rattey volunteered to be the guest speakers for the Memorial Day ceremony in Miles City. The Memorial Day ceremony for the Montana State Veterans Cemetery will be held on the traditional day - May 30.

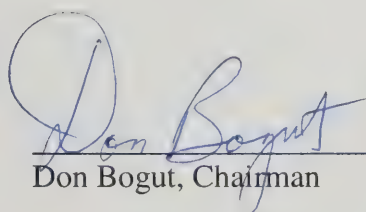
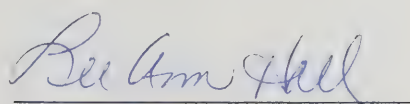
For the division's budget report, Joe stated that our fiscal year (FY) 04 budget of \$936,000 will be expended by the end of June (the state's fiscal year is July 1 through June 30). We have \$1.2 million for FY 05. We have already projected the FY05 personnel and operational costs and do not expect to spend the entire amount authorized for us. If the money is not spent during the fiscal year, it will roll over to the next in the special revenue account - so it is not "lost" to the division. Joe is looking into other veteran service and benefit programs that may be a good, valid investment of the veterans' services special revenue. He stated that the division will not be spending money needlessly or just because it is available. Credible budget management is key to long-term support from the Governor's Office and the Legislature.

Testimony was heard from Joe Walsh (Bozeman) that centered on his perceptions of what the Board and division should be doing. He had testified previously at the State Administration and Veterans Affairs Interim Committee (SAVAC) hearing about many of the same issues. The SAVAC asked him to put his concerns and information requests in writing so they could be formally addressed. Mr. Bogut, Board Chairman, asked him to do the same thing.

Board member Bob Pavlovich discussed his concerns for getting a veterans nursing home in Southwest Montana. He asked that everyone meet with his or her Senators and Representatives to get the request before the next Legislature.

The next meeting date was discussed and scheduled for July 7, 2004 in Missoula. Charlie Crookshanks volunteered to secure a meeting location. With no other issues brought forward for discussion, Chairman Bogut adjourned the general portion of the Board meeting, announced a recess, and then convened the Board into Executive Session.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.


Don Bogut, Chairman
Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING MINUTES

- July 7, 2004 -

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Don Kettner on July 7, 2004 in Missoula, with the following individuals present:

Don Kettner, Vice-Chairman
Charles VanGorden, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Bob Pavlovich, Member
Jim Heffernan, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Ed Sperry, Member
Kelly Williams, Member
Lee Logan, Member
Sen. Joe Tropila, Member
Polly LaTray, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator

Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
Erin Ballas, Sen. Burns
Andrea Merrill, Sen. Baucus.
Jeff Gerard, Rep. Rehberg
Bill Furois, DAV
Len Leibinger, Service Officer
Representative Dick Haines
Jim & Mavis Hanson, Guests
Joe Walsh, Guest
Abe Abrahamson, Guest
John Sawyer, Guest
Rick Norine, Guest

Vice-Chairman Don Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. The Vice-Chairman Kettner made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Jim Heffernan approved the minutes and Charles Van Gordon seconded the motion, motion was carried.

The division's operational status was discussed. All 22 authorized positions are filled. In the last two months, service officers have been hired for Havre, Butte and Belgrade. We are now renting an office in Havre, as the Havre Armory Annex was not a good location and had personal security issues. The Havre open house will be August 11, 2004.

In July we will be five of our Service Officers to American Legion Service Officer will attend accreditation training. These training courses, regardless of the organization sponsoring it, are recognized by all Congressionally-sanctioned veteran service organizations. In June, approx. 10 service officers will receive certification training from the Fort Harrison VA Center, and the National Veterans' Legal Services Program will be in Helena in August to conduct a training session with all our service officers.

The Liberty House now has donations totally \$65,000. The initial goal was \$270,000 but 1000 square feet was added to the design bringing the new goal to \$400,000. As soon documents are received designating Liberty House with federal non-profit status, federal grants will be pursued. The Montana Lottery has continued its "Beetle Bailey scratch ticket campaign, but no profits from these tickets go to Liberty House.

Cheryl Heald, Billings Veteran Service Officer, and Joe will be working on a new program to train the American Legion Service Officers. The training will take place in Billings and Helena in October, 2004. The division will pay for this training.

Len Leibinger will assume the outreach duties at the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge. Lori Perkio and Liza Pantano will do the outreach at Warm Springs to include the WATCH program.

The Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison is progressing with two construction projects. The extension of the maintenance building, addition of an external restroom, and transition of the electric heating system to propane should be complete in August. The next construction project will be the refurbishment of the memorial wall and entrance directory, widening the north/south sidewalk to the memorial plaza, and installation of three new flagpoles. This project will cost about \$70,000 and will begin in late August with expected completion in early Fall.

For the Missoula cemetery, there were some land transfer issues. Road right of ways were discovered during the survey process which were previously unknown to DNRC and the County Commissioners. However, the right of ways have now been abandoned.

Joe showed everyone the new cemetery tri-fold brochure that could be placed at funeral homes, provided to veteran's service organizations, and anyone else interested in distributing the tri-folds.

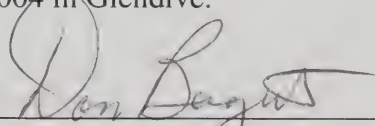
For the budget report, Joe explained that we expect to spend all but \$10,000. 100% of the General Fund budget will be spent. The \$10,000 not being spent in SB401 account will roll over to FY05. We will have a much higher amount of SB401 monies, as we will be getting a full year worth of funds from the 50-cent license plate fees.


We will soon be developing a public relations program to include radio, TV PSA's. We will also be working on a veteran-friendly information web site.

Joe discussed some Legislative initiatives; including: The authorization to accept and spend the anticipated \$2 million grant for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery; and requesting an additional fulltime equivalent (FTE) to operate the Eastern Montana State Veterans' Cemetery (currently the services are contracted and Joe thinks we can save money and ensure long-term stability in the position by having an FTE versus the current contract arrangement). The only other Legislative issue for the upcoming Legislature is a prospective Bill that would make permanent registration mandatory for light vehicles 11 years and older. Passage of this bill could mean a 55% to 60% decrease in the license plate program. The Disabled American Veterans will be supporting a Bill allowing disabled veterans to purchase "DV" plates for two family vehicles.

The Montana Veterans Affairs Division Indian Veterans Outreach Program was discussed. The concept of this is to establish an outreach program in partnership with interested Tribal Nations. The program would be developed mutually by MVAD and each reservation's governing body; and is designed to maximize professional and accountable veterans' services to Montana Indian veterans. The program would – as determined by the participating tribal government – be incorporated into an existing Tribal Veterans' Representative (TVR) program or be established independently to complement the reservation's existing veterans' services program.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting date has been scheduled for October 13, 2004 in Glendive.


Don Bogut, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING MINUTES

- October 13, 2004

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Bogut on October 13, 2004 in Glendive, with the following individuals present:

Don Bogut, Chairman
Charles VanGorden, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Bob Pavlovich, Member
Don Kettner, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Ed Sperry, Member
Kelly Williams, Member
Ray Tindall, Member
Sen. Joe Tropila, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Maj. Gen. Randall Mosley, Member

Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
Bonnie Curran, Veterans' Service Officer
Gary Gaub, Adm. Veterans Nursing Home
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Payton, Guests
Angelo Bianco, Guest
State Representative Ralph Lenhart
Daniel Rodriguez, Guests
Tom Toomey, Guest
Buzz Morris, Guest
Judy Thompson, Guest
Scott Duke, CEO-Glendive Nursing Home
Darrell LaMere, Native American Dev. Corp
Dominique Rattey, Guest

Chairman Don Bogut opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. Chairman Bogut made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Don Kettner approved the minutes and Ray Tindall seconded the motion, motion was carried.

The division's operational status was discussed. All 22 authorized positions are filled. We have 17 veteran service officers, 3 administrative staff and 2 cemetery staff. Sixteen service officers are accredited and certified. Accreditation is through a national training course and certification is done through the Veterans Administration. Paul Grant is scheduled for a grand writing school later this month.

Joe Foster talked about the new statistical report. Joe explained that this report is a great tool to see specifically where the veterans are being served and the financial result. Each month the offices provide statistics that are transferred to a master listing. The master statistics report shows the number of veterans served, where they live, the type of claim, and the monetary amounts the veterans will be receiving. The total amount of federal VA benefits Montana veterans receive directly due to Montana Veterans' Affairs Division service officer work was approx. \$62 million in fiscal year 2004. The question was asked if we collect statistics from the VFW, DAV and other service organizations. It was explained that we only collect those statistics with American Legion and Montana Veterans' Affairs Division power of attorneys.

Cheryl Heald, Billings Veteran Service Officer, and Patricia Crowley, Helena Veteran Service Officer will be training American Legion Post service officers in Billings and in Helena Oct. 16 and Oct. 23, 2004 (respectively).

Len Leibinger has assumed the outreach duties at the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge. Lori Perkio and Liza Pantano are doing the outreach at Warm Springs to include the WATCH program. These services are intended to positively impact recidivism rates and provide a more stable income for inmates' families.

Jackie Williams, Veterans Benefits Technician, will be attending web-site training for the State of Montana and will then have the ability to edit and update the division's web-site.

Debra Winters from the Department of Veterans Affairs briefed our employees on a new program called Virtual VA. This is a new VA information management program that will maintain veterans' claim folders electronically. This will enable our veteran service officers to access claim information almost instantly if they hold the veteran's power of attorney.

MVAD gave a \$1000 grant to the Billings homeless veterans' stand down and a \$1000 grant to the Libby homeless veterans' stand down.

Each veterans' affairs employee received two polo shirts with the division's logo on them, along with an outline of the State of Montana and town their office is located. The cemetery employees have previously been provided shirts, coats and hats with the same type logos. These clothing items are particularly useful during outreach operations and at the state veterans cemeteries. We will also purchase polo shirts for the Board members as they conduct liaison activities.

The Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison is progressing with the two construction projects. The extension of the maintenance building, addition of an external restroom, and transition of the electric heating system to propane is now complete. The construction project to refurbish the memorial wall and entrance directory, widening the north/south sidewalk to the memorial plaza, and installation of three new flagpoles should be completed in November 2004.

Governor Martz signed the Executive Order transferring land designated for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery from the Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation to the Dept. of Military Affairs. This will be an approximate \$3 million project and we hope to be open in the spring of 2007. Included in the cemetery plans will be a new office for our Missoula veterans' affairs office currently located in the National Guard Armory in Missoula. Bill Jayne, Director of the State Cemetery Grants program, has approved this concept. The federal VA's regional cemetery program manager (from Denver) inspected the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison. The inspection went very well, the division is awaiting the formal assessment.

For the budget report, Joe explained that we will have a much higher amount of SB401 monies, as we will be getting a full year worth of funds from the 50-cent license plate fees. This additional funding has enabled us to establish the new veterans' service office in Havre, purchase the new mobile veteran services van and hire three additional personnel (all veterans' service officers). In future years we will be looking at funding other veteran benefit programs. The cost of the new mobile veteran services van, fully equipped, will be approximately \$70,000.

The Montana Veterans Affairs Division (MVAD) Indian Veterans Outreach Program was revisited. The concept of this is to establish an outreach program in partnership with interested Tribal Nations. The program would be developed mutually by MVAD and each reservation's governing body; and is designed to maximize professional and accountable veterans' services to Montana Indian veterans. Fort Belknap is interested in the program and a "draft" Memorandum of Understanding has been developed by the Montana Dept. of Justice. Inquiries about the program have also been received from the Little Shell group.

Initiative 149 (cigarette tax) was discussed. If passed, the language could be legislatively edited to ensure no negative impact on the veteran nursing home program.

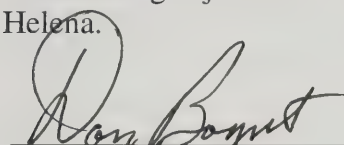
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Gary Gaub gave a brief definition on the Category 8 priority system; and that discussion was followed by Angelo Bianco, who provided a history of the Category 1-7 system.

Joe gave the Board a handout and analysis on the suicide statistics in Montana. It has been reported that the veteran suicide rate in Montana is significantly higher than the general population. The handout, based upon information from the Vital Statistics Bureau, shows that the overall veteran suicide in Montana is very similar to the state's general population – with the exception of the age 70 and above, where the veteran suicide rate is significantly higher.

Joe handed out some examples of designs for the new patriotic license plate. We would like to decide on the final design in November so the plates can be for sale in January 2005. Charlie Crookshanks thought we should charge \$15 for the plate instead of \$10. This concept was discussed with no action recommended at this time.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting date has been scheduled for December 7, 2004 in Helena.



Don Bogut, Chairman



Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING MINUTES

- December 7, 2004 -

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Bogut at 9:15 a.m. on December 7, 2004 in Helena, with the following individuals present:

Don Bogut, Chairman
Charles VanGorden, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Bob Pavlovich, Member
Ed Sperry, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Sen. Joe Tropila, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Maj. Gen. Randall Mosley, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator

Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
Polly LaTray, Member
Lee Logan, Member
Jim Heffernan, Member
Larry Longfellow, VFW
Gary White, American Legion
Bill Furois, DAV
Jim Balog, Guest
Jeff Gerard, Rep. Rehberg
Sarah Converse, Sen. Burns

Chairman Don Bogut opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. Chairman Bogut made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Bob Pavlovich approved the minutes and Harvey Rattey seconded the motion, motion was carried.

Maj. Gen. Mosley started the meeting off by talking about the three most important areas in the Guard. Those are mobilization, transformation/reorganization and support to families. As of today, 82% of the Montana Air National Guard and 62% of the Montana Army National Guard personnel have been deployed under Title 10 Federal Active Duty. Even though we are at a high level of deployment, there are still 2000 guardsmen left to handle state missions.

The division's operational status was discussed. Currently we have two vacant positions. Vacant is the Veteran Service Officer I in Belgrade and the Benefits/Admin Support position in Helena. The job announcements are posted and will close Dec. 20, 2004.

Joe Foster talked about the final statistics showing the federal VA financial benefit Montana veterans received during fiscal year 2004 and to date in fiscal year 2005. The total amount of federal VA benefits Montana veterans received directly due to Montana Veterans' Affairs Division service officer work was \$60,416,286 in fiscal year 2004. We are forecasting over \$70 million for fiscal year 2005. This money is primarily the result of disability compensation claims and pensions. It does not include such areas as VA medical care or home loans.

Joe announced that we have now completed the Personnel Performance Management Appraisal documents for the veteran service officers, cemetery program personnel and the administrative staff. This has been an extensive process to transition from the previous performance appraisal program to a much more comprehensive and reflective of the employees' duty performance.

The Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison is progressing. The construction project to refurbish the memorial wall and entrance directory, widening the north/south sidewalk to the memorial plaza, and installation of three new flagpoles is very near completion. The memorial wall was badly deteriorating and was not up to National Shine Standards. We are ordering new

Military Seals. The existing ones are plastic and 15" in diameter, whereas the new ones will be bronze with an 18" diameter. Total cost for this project is around \$85,000, with expected reimbursement from a federal VA grant.

We are in the planning process for developing the next interment section and other improvements at the cemetery. Federal VA cemetery officials inspected the cemetery and discussed improvement ideas. The inspection was very positive, and yielded some suggestions for the future development; including: replacing the fence and gate, enhancing the irrigation system, and adding a turn-out area near the directory. Also discussed was the plan to build a columbarium. Another federal VA cemetery inspection team – including Mr. Bill Jayne, administrator of the VA's cemetery grant program – visited the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Miles City. They were impressed with the cemetery, and provided suggestions for improvements; including: leveling the current interment section, deleting the use of the concrete bases with the upright memorials, and completing the road pavement to the maintenance facility. Federal VA cemetery program grants will be attained to make all suggested improvements.

The Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery design team met with local interested citizens. This was a two-day event that focused on cemetery design. We are working on getting legislative approval to spend \$3.25 million federal grant. If all goes as we anticipate, we hope to break ground in 2006 and have an operational cemetery by spring of 2007. Charlie Crookshanks is working with students at Big Sky High School to develop their active support work and interest in the cemetery.

Compared to 2003, the license plate sales have increased by 398 plates to date. At this rate we should see an approximate 1400 plate increase for 2004 over 2003.

There may be prospective legislation to build a state veterans cemetery in Yellowstone County. Representative Michael Lange and Joe are working together on this. Joe has viewed a couple of prospective sites already; one by Huntley and the other near an existing cemetery. Key to pursuing a cemetery in Yellowstone County – or anywhere else in the state – is the division's ability to afford the perpetual operations and maintenance expense. When the Missoula cemetery is up and running, annual expenditures are expected to exceed revenue by approximately \$15,000 per year for the short-term and eventually level out. A fourth veterans cemetery cannot be afforded unless there are changes to the cemetery account's revenue profile. Rep. Lange and Joe are discussing legislative ideas along this line. There is \$385,137 in the special revenue account. This is down from last year due to the construction projects at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery and the design expenses supporting the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery, but with the expected \$85,000 federal grant, this balance will improve. Once fully operational, the Missoula cemetery will cost approximately \$100,000 a year to maintain and operate. This is the same figure anticipated if there is a cemetery in Yellowstone County.

Budget update. We are on track with our authorized spending authority. The biggest thing right now is the upcoming legislation. SB401 gave us a strong revenue stream for veterans service initiatives. Joe is moving cautiously in program expenditures and sees programs like the Indian Veterans Outreach program and grants for homeless veteran stand downs as important immediate commitments. Future grant programs similar to what other states have can be developed as the Board and division develop its long-term vision of additional supportable types of veterans service programs.

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At the last Board meeting in Glendive, Mr. Darrell LaMere of the Native American Development Corporation (NADC) introduced himself and talked a little about his non-profit program, and asked about our Indian Veterans Outreach Program. Joe and Cheryl Heald met with Mr. LaMere and Ms. Velma Holman-Pretty on Top in Billings. The NADC was impressed with the outreach program, and Joe and Cheryl were impressed and enthused about prospectively contracting with the NADC along the same lines as what has been proposed at Fort Belknap. The cost would be approximately \$7000 a year at each location. Joe also met with Sarah Bond, attorney at the Dept. of Justice who handles contracts with Montana's Indian nations. Ms. Bond stated that the NADC is a respected, well run operation. Boardmember Polly LaTray stated that she did some research on the NADC and agrees that this is a solid and appropriate organization to contract with, in our effort to reach Indian veterans in the Billings area. The Fort Belknap legal council is still reviewing the draft contract Joe sent them.

Since the last meeting, Joe has received on Patriotic license plate concept from Harvey Rattey. Joe is going to extend the deadline to mid-December get more input on the plates.

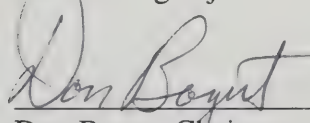
The division is not sponsoring any legislation, although a number of veterans Bills are expected to be developed and pursued; for instance, the Yellowstone County cemetery, and an additional set of DV plates for disabled veterans. We are asking for a full-time state position at the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery to replace the contract approach currently in place. The cost difference is essentially a "wash" and Joe believes a state position would solidify both long-term continuity and supervisory oversight at the cemetery. He stressed that the current contracted personnel are doing an excellent job. There will be a legislative coordination meeting later today for the veterans service organizations, Board and division. The intent is to discuss known legislative issues and develop a communications/coordination process to monitor and act on issues throughout the 2005 Session. Board member Bob Pavlovich says to watch the cigarette tax issue to make sure we don't lose any funding for the veterans nursing home program.

The new web site is still on hold. The State of Montana is in the process of revamping the entire format and we need our effort and product to comply with the State's standards. Once the state's system changes are in place and we have our person formally trained, we will be able to manage our web site "in house."

Board member Karen Furu asked Joe about having a town hall meeting the night before our Board meetings. Joe said that was a great idea and Board discussion supported the concept. Our next meeting will be held in Havre on May 17, 2005, with a town hall meeting to be planned for the evening of May 16.

Questions were raised about having a meeting during the Legislative Session, and the decision was for Board members to be prepared if needed due to significant legislative issues.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting date has been scheduled for May 17, 2004 in Havre.


Don Bogut, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING MINUTES

- May 17, 2005 -

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Bogut at 9:00 a.m., May 17, 2005 in Havre, with the following individuals present:

Don Bogut, Chairman
Charles VanGorden, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Bob Pavlovich, Member
Ed Sperry, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Sen. Joe Tropila, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Kelly Williams, Member
Don Kettner, Member

Joe Foster, Administrator
Jim Heffernan, Member
Lee Ann Hall, Office Manager
Sarah Converse, Sen. Burns
Diana LaBuda, Veterans Service Officer - Havre
Robert Thornton, U.S. Dept. of Labor
Judy Houle, Guest
Clifford Sutherland, Tribal Veteran Representative
Ken Hanna, Guest
Sylvia Murray, Guest

Chairman Don Bogut opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. Chairman Bogut made a motion that the Minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Boardmember Ed Sperry so moved and Boardmember Charlie Crookshanks seconded the motion, motion was carried.

The Montana Veterans' Affairs Division's new web site is expected to be up and running by the end of May. The division will be able to manage the web site itself, and edit as needed. The division did not previously have the authority or capability. This will accomplish a significant initiative the division has been pursuing for close to a year.

Boardmember Sperry addressed the idea of providing veterans' service information packets to all the churches in Montana – to be used as an information resource for church leaders/counselors. After discussion, Chairman Bogut assigned a committee to pursue development of the information and its distribution. Boardmember Sperry will lead the committee, comprised of he, Boardmember Sarah Converse and Ms. Diana LaBuda.

Currently the division has a Veterans' Service Officer I (VSO I) opening in the Belgrade service office. Mr. Kevin Stone, who had been recently hired into the position, was selected to the vacant VSO I position in Butte. The movement was prompted due to his wife attaining employment in Butte. Ms. June Rychalski was also recently hired as the Administrative Support/Veterans' Services Technician in the division's administrative office in Helena.

We received a federal VA grant for \$85,000 for the Montana State Veterans Cemetery memorial wall/directory upgrade project. The project has already been completed and the process will be initiated to submit reimbursements from the federal VA. All reimbursements – up to \$85,000 total – will be deposited in the state veterans' cemetery account. The Montana State Veterans Cemetery is due for expansion and we will be requesting a federal VA grant to expand section D, repair the fence, and add a water storage and distribution system. We will also be working towards constructing a columbarium at the cemetery once the budget issues associated with developing the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula are fully resolved. The 2005 Legislature authorized \$3.2 million spending authority for the cemetery, which will be funded in its entirety by a federal VA grant.

Joe Foster reported that veteran license plate sales and donations are up from last year. The 14,318 "veteran" plates purchased so far this calendar year is 1094 plates more than last year this time.

Bill Jayne, director of the federal VA's state cemetery grant program in Washington, D.C., conducted an on-site evaluation of the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Miles City last October. He commended the division for the cemetery's appearance and operation; although, he did have concerns about the concrete "collars" holding the headstones in place and the fact that the headstones were approximately 1"-2" higher than National Shrine Standards dictate. Joe assured Mr. Jayne that we will set the stones lower into the ground so we will be in compliance with standards. Mr. Jayne did verbally approve a federal grant to fund a security cover over the pump plant, finish paving the road to the maintenance building, and build a fence around the spoils area. As for the "collars," the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery Advisory Council supports retaining the "collars," which are beneficial in plot and headstone maintenance operations.

Lt. Governor John Bohlinger will be the guest speaker for the Memorial Day services at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison. Also speaking will be Maj. Gen. Randy Mosley and Mr. Morris McLees. Ms. Alma Dickey will be recognized for her years of dedicated service at the cemetery.

Ralph DeCunzo - Administrator, Contracting and Construction for the Department of Military Affairs and Joe Foster will be heading to Seattle in June for a meeting with the architects to discuss design issues and view design products regarding the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery to be located in Missoula.

The Legislature passed HB 728 creating a new veterans cemetery in Yellowstone County. Joe showed the Board how the cemetery program would be fiscally impacted by adding a fourth state veterans cemetery to the program. At this time, the program cannot "afford" a fourth state veterans cemetery. At projected revenue levels versus expenses, the program would incur a net loss of approximately \$81,500 per year - depleting the cemetery program's special revenue account within five years. There is currently a bill before Congress that would raise the plot allowance for veteran interment at state veterans cemeteries from \$300 to \$1000. If passed, this would very positively impact revenue; but still would not resolve the financial issue.

The Montana Veterans Affairs Division (MVAD) has committed to provide financial support to the Disabled American Veterans - Department of Montana statewide veteran transport program. The division's financial assistance will be used specifically to purchase vans for the program. This is a long-term commitment. The division granted \$36,000 to the DAV this fiscal year (2005) to purchase three vans, and is planning on funding additional vans in fiscal year 2006 and beyond.

Mr. Foster briefed the Board regarding the National American Indian Veterans (NAIV), Inc., which is in the process of prospective chartering by the United States Congress. If chartered, the NAIV would have the same status as other national veterans service organizations - for example, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, etc. The National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs has endorsed this chartering through Resolution to Congress. The Board voted unanimously to support Mr. Foster's efforts in assisting the NAIV's chartering process, to include letters of support to Montana's Congressional Delegation. Once chartered, reservations associated with the NAIV could attain fully accredited veterans service officers. This is considered a very positive initiative by the Board, with great potential to enhance veterans' services to Montana's Tribal nations.

Ms. Judy Houle stated that the Tribal Veterans Representative program on Montana's reservations is doing very good things and should receive more recognition. Mr. Foster stated that if the NAIV is chartered, TVRs would have the potential of becoming formally trained and accredited, and therefore be able to provide more services to the veterans they serve.

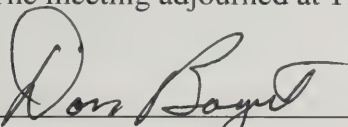
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Sarah Converse, representative with Senator Burns office, stated that the Senator introduced the "Veterans Road to Health Care Act of 2005". This is legislation designed to raise the travel reimbursement rate for veterans who must travel to Veterans Administration hospitals for treatment.


Boardmember Charlie Crookshanks will be traveling to Washington, D.C. for a full day of briefings on two major inequities regarding the military's Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). The inequity issues are: 1 – the dollar-for-dollar reduction of VA benefits for service-connected deaths from survivors' SBP annuities; and 2 – the 2008 effective date for 30-year paid up SBP coverage, which imposes undue financial penalties on the earliest SBP enrollees. More information on these issues can be found at www.moaa.org.

After discussion, the next Board meeting was scheduled for Sept. 20, 2005 in Columbia Falls. Boardmember Kelly Williams will coordinate the meeting place.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.



Don Bogut, Chairman



Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING MINUTES

- September 20, 2005 -

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Bogut at 3:00 p.m., September 20, 2005 in Columbia Falls, with the following individuals present:

Don Bogut, Chairman	Joe Foster, Administrator
Bob Pavlovich, Member	Sarah Converse, Sen. Burns
Ed Sperry, Member	Lee Ann Hall, Officer Manager
Charlie Crookshanks, Member	Sherry Stewart, Veteran Service Officer - Kalispell
Don Kettner, Member	Jane Geraldts, Veteran Service Officer - Kalispell
Charlie Crookshanks, Member	Alvy Chapman, DAV
Sen. Joe Tropila, Member	Steve Combs, DAV
Kelly Williams, Member	Susan Rhein, Fur for Vets program
Jim Heffernan, Member	Jack Mitchell, American Legion
Polly LaTray, Member	

Chairman Don Bogut opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being there. Chairman Bogut made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Board member Don Kettner moved and Board member Bob Pavlovich seconded the motion, motion was carried.

Joe Foster reported that the division is now at full strength. Janine Mahn was recently hired as a Veteran Service Office I in the Belgrade office.

Our semi-annual veteran service officer training will be held at the end of the month. Janine Mahn, Kevin Stone, June Rychalski and Paul Grant will also be taking TRIPS training in September. This training is conducted by Fort Harrison VA Center staff, and upon completion will authorize access to protected veteran information data bases.

Joe briefed the board regarding the veterans' service offices' financial statistics report. Joe explained that this report is a great tool to see specifically where the veterans are being served, and the resultant financial impact. Each month the offices provide statistics that are transferred to a master listing. The master statistics report shows the number of veterans served, where they live, the type of claim, and the monetary amounts the veterans will be receiving. The total amount of federal VA benefits Montana veterans receive directly due to Montana Veterans' Affairs Division service officer work was approx. \$84 million in fiscal year 2005. Joe explained that the significant increase over fiscal year 2004 (\$60 million) is due to the three new employees authorized by the 2003 Legislature, a new service office in Havre and the enhanced quality of the training provided the service officer staff.

The Montana Veterans' Affairs Division's new web site is up and running. At this point all we have to do is edit pages as needed, enhance it with various VA news items, and work on the Veterans Memorials page. Joe stated the intent to develop a "special interest" listing specific to Montana's American Indian veteran population.

Joe will be talking with Regional Service Officer – Billings, Cheryl Heald, about conducting outreach services in Glendive's state correctional facility and the newly established WATCH program.

The Liberty House ground breaking ceremony will be held on September 22, 2005 at Fort Harrison. The legislature appropriated \$100,000 through Montana Veterans Affairs for this project. The money was forwarded to the Liberty House Foundation in late July.

The Kalispell veterans affairs office, along with the Montana Army National Guard units, are now in the process of moving to the new Readiness Center located on Highway 93 North just outside of Kalispell.

Sarah Converse, representative with Senator Burns' office, reported on the "Veterans Road to Health Care Act of 2005". This is legislation designed to raise the travel reimbursement rate for veterans who must travel to Veterans Administration hospitals for treatment. Sarah also reported on the "Travel Pay Increase" bill.

Joe Foster reported that "Veteran" license plate sales are up 275 plates from last calendar year at this time. Board member Charlie Crookshank gave a briefing on the sale of veterans license plates. He put together a spreadsheet on the potential income the plates could generate over the next two years. Charlie has been speaking to groups in his area to make them aware of the potential income veterans license plates could generate, which funds operations at our state veteran cemeteries.

In fiscal year 2005, we spent \$150,000 out of the cemetery program's special revenue account for startup costs for the new Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery to be located in Missoula. Once we get the federal grant in November, we will be reimbursed the \$150,000.

Currently there are 1788 burials in the Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Helena, and 143 burials at the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Miles City.

We have a water rights issue at the Miles City cemetery, in that we do not have any. Joe said that that in conjunction with the governing irrigation district, we are working to affect a transfer in water rights from two businesses that do not – and never will – use their water rights. This is an ongoing project that is extremely important to the long-term stability in having adequate water to water the cemetery.

A \$13,000 paving project is expected to be completed at the Miles City cemetery. The paving project will finish paving the road to the maintenance building. The funds for this project are coming from the original grant on this cemetery. Approximately \$16,000 of the original \$1.5 million grant is still available, and any funds left over after the paving project will be utilized for security fencing around the pumping plant.

The design documents for the Missoula cemetery have been sent to Washington, D.C. for review and comment. Board member Charlie Crookshanks said the Missoula cemetery committee has viewed the plans. The formal dedication is anticipated to be Memorial Day, 2007.

Jack Mitchell with the American Legion asked Joe if the Montana Veterans' Affairs Division could assist financially with putting a sprinkler system in the veteran portion of the cemetery in Polson. Joe said that it wasn't possible at this time, but in the future we may be able to provide assistance for this project.

In fiscal year 2005, the division purchased three vans for the Disabled American Veterans' (DAV) veteran transport program. For fiscal year 2006 budget period, we have provided the DAV \$100,000 to purchase additional vans in an effort to take the very high mileage vans out of the system (200,000+ miles) and expand veteran transport capability throughout the state. This fiscal year we will purchase the "mobile" veteran service office. The total cost is expected to be around \$70,000, with mobile operations expected to commence in the Spring of 2006. The state pay raise of 3.5% will go into effect October 1, 2005. In fiscal year 2007 there will be a 4% state pay raise, and we are prepared to grant additional monies for the DAV veteran transport program – as needs dictate. Joe stated that the DAV continues to have a very aggressive fundraising effort in Montana's communities to raise money for van purchases.

Lt. Col. Susan Rhein (ret.) was briefed the board on the "Fur for Vets" program in Montana. With donated, used fur coats, Ms. Rhein recycles them into 40-inch long blankets that wheelchair-bound veterans in

Montana's veteran nursing homes can use during colder seasons. All fur blankets are donated to the veterans. Board member Don Kettner made a motion to endorse this program, and it was seconded by Bob Pavlovich.

Joe explained the new fee collecting system generated by Senate Bill 285 which revised the motor vehicle law regarding revenue and disbursement to agencies/organizations specific to vehicle registration fees. Essentially, it replaced specific fee amounts (e.g., the 50-cents of registration revenue that funds the division's veterans' services special revenue account) to a percentage system. Joe worked with the Governor's budget office and the bill's sponsor to ensure there would be no negative impact on the division's revenue. He reported that the new system should work very well for us. It affects both the veterans' services and cemetery program special revenue accounts.

Ed Sperry, Sarah Converse and Diana LaBuda have been working on the brochures for veterans benefits. They originally planned on sending these brochures to the churches, but will expand the outreach to other organizations. Sarah said the program for the brochures is very user friendly and easy to update. Joe talked about how extensively the division's services has "penetrated" the state's veteran community (based upon national statistics), and this type outreach tool will serve to better increase veterans' and social service providers awareness of our services.

Steve Combs with the Disabled American Veterans talked to the group about the status of the DAV transportation program. He said that Commander Beach is very appreciative of the money given to the DAV transportation program through the veterans affairs grant program.

The Governors Office has notified Joe that the 11 Veterans' Service Officers nominated for the Governor's Award for Excellence have been selected to be recognized at the awards ceremony later this month. Joe said that he initially nominated a team of 17 service officers; however the rules were such that we had to pare the quantity down to the 11. This is a very significant and much deserved recognition of the division's service officers and their contribution to Montana's veteran population.

A motion was made to have three meetings a year, and potentially making one of them a retreat. The board members would also like to schedule the meetings well in advance to ensure maximum participation. The change to three meetings a year was determined appropriate due to the limited amount of "business" conducted each meeting, travel expenses, and difficulty with board members being able to attend four meetings each year. Motion passed unanimously. *DK*

Board member Jim Heffernan announced that there will be an unveiling of a poster created by artist Bob Morgan that will benefit the Marine Corps' "Toys for Tots" program.

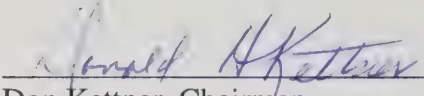
Elections were held and Don Kettner was elected Board Chairman, and Bob Pavlovich has been elected as the new Vice-Chairman. Each will serve a two-year term. Former chairman Don Bogut was recognized for his outstanding leadership and accomplishments through his term as chairman. Mr. Bogut will continue serving on the board.

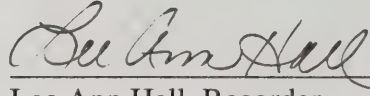
Board member Kelly Williams and the Montana Veterans' Home staff were commended for their outstanding support in hosting the board meeting. Activities conducted prior to the board meeting included tours of the home's veteran cemetery, and the complex and specific facilities. Coordination between the home's staff and the division was initiated to provide assistance in upgrading the cemetery's flag pole and pump plant structure.

Discussion took place regarding the board meeting and associated "town hall" meeting. Based upon the experiences both Havre (the previous board meeting) and in Columbia Falls, the board determined it is in everyone's best interest conduct the "town hall" meeting in the same timeframe as the board meeting; thereby maximizing public involvement in both meetings and allowing the board to take immediate action on any issues that might arise from the public. The next board meeting is scheduled for Bozeman on Jan. 19, 2006, and will be conducted in the evening to maximize public and board member attendance.

Final discussion took place regarding the "town hall" meeting to take place that evening at 7 p.m. in the same meeting room.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.


Don Kettner, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING MINUTES

- January 19, 2006 -

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Kettner at 7 p.m., January 19, 2006 in Belgrade, with the following individuals present:

Don Kettner, Chairman
Bob Pavlovich, Vice Chairman
Ed Sperry, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Karen Furu, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Sen. Joe Tropila, Member
Kelly Williams, Member
Keith Heavyrunner, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member

Polly LaTray, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member
Maj. Gen. Randy Mosley, Member
Sarah Converse, Sen. Burns
Stacy Graham, Rep. Rehberg
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Admin. Specialist
Kelly Nevin, Veteran Service Officer II
Janine Mahn, Veteran Service Officer I

Chairman Don Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. Chairman Kettner made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Board member Ed Sperry so moved and Board member Bob Pavlovich seconded the motion; motion was carried.

Joe Foster introduced our newest Board members, Keith Heavyrunner of Browning and Stacy Graham of Congressman Rehberg's Helena office.

The "Town Hall" portion of the meeting opened with questions from the audience. Senator Mike Wheat from Bozeman asked how the newer, bigger Board is working out. Joe said it is working well, with one of its great strengths being significantly more input from the veteran community resultant of having 20 board members located throughout the state – versus the previous Board quantity of five.

Another question from the audience was about funding for military funerals. The National Defense Authorization Act was passed, but reportedly never funded. The issues expressed were in regards to funding uniforms, travel expenses and equipment. The National Guard has a training program for the Honor Guards, and once accomplished the attendees can be certified and could receive funding for participating in an Honor Guard detail. Maj. Gen. Mosley said he would help in anyway possible. Joe said that Montana Veterans' Affairs has funded uniforms for Honor Guards supporting the two State Veterans Cemeteries, but there is not funding available to purchase uniforms for all the state's Honor Guards. However, the division has committed to fund uniforms with a 50-50 match – based upon available funds. He stressed that all requests for Honor Guard uniform funding must be processed through the requesting organization's state department level – following a "chain of command." With the department level's approval, the grants are considered. If funded, the grant is provided to the department, which then passes the funds down to the requesting post or chapter. Sarah Converse (Senator Burn's office) and Stacy Graham (Congressman Rehburg's office) said they would also look into the funding issue, specific to the National Defense Authorization Act.

Currently the division is at 100% personnel strength. During the 2005 Legislative Session, the division was authorized a full-time employee for the cemetery in Miles City. Kurt Holmlund was hired January 1, 2006 – bringing the "full-time equivalent" level to 23. The state veterans cemetery program now has three positions, along with 17 veteran service officers, and three in the administrative office.

In February, three of our veteran service officers will be attending American Legion accreditation training in Washington, D.C. Attending this year will be Kevin Stone from Butte, Janine Mahn from Belgrade, and Len Leibinger from Missoula.

To date, our veteran service officers are responsible for bringing in over \$50 million worth of benefits for veterans and their family members. These benefits include disability compensation, pension and burial benefits; but do not include VA home loans or medical/dental services. Last year's total compensation figure of \$85 million is expected to be surpassed by the end of this fiscal year.

On January 9, 2006, Senator Burns presented a check for \$200,000 to the Federal VA to assist in funding the Liberty House. Liberty House will provide overnight lodging for veterans' family members while the veteran is being treated in the VA hospital. This service is free of charge. The \$200,000 should cover the rest of the building's construction expense, and a grand opening for the Liberty House is expected this spring or early summer.

The Montana National Guard has hired a State Benefits Advisor who will work with Guard and Reserve personnel; particularly those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The duties include counseling and referral services regarding TRICARE, family readiness, employment, and veterans' benefits. Hired was Dave Lake, who is working closely with Montana Veterans' Affairs Division personnel.

Joe Foster reported that "Veteran" license plate sales are up 214 plates from last calendar year. The increase is not as high as it has been in the past, possibly due – in part – to the dramatic rise in fuel prices in 2005. The division sends a letter to all returning veterans and specifically discusses the "Veteran" license plate and its availability; as well as the services available through the division's veterans' service offices – and their locations.

Joe attended a meeting in Missoula on the initiative to add campaign, service and/or award ribbons to the "Veteran" license plates. In attendance were veteran service organization representatives and Representative Gary MacLaren – who is interested in sponsoring any needed legislation. The first task at hand is to identify which ribbons would be available for placement on the plate. The cost would be \$5.00 per ribbon, with a maximum of two ribbons on the plate.

At the Montana State Veterans Cemetery, we currently have 1846 interments, of which 1488 are veterans and 358 are spouses. At the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery, we currently have 155 interments, of which 144 are veterans and 31 are spouses. There is no new construction planned at either of these cemeteries at this time.

The final designs and cost figures for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula have been sent to the Federal VA. The project manager at the VA has stated that we won't be receiving the construction grant until sometime between June and late September this year. If this is the case, then we may not be able to have the dedication ceremony on Memorial Day of 2007, as previously planned. However, we do expect that the cemetery will be in operation by late summer of 2007. A dedication ceremony will be planned accordingly.

The division's budget is \$2.2 million for fiscal year 2006 and 2007; of which \$1.4 million is general fund, and \$786,000 is special revenue generated from the 50-cent fee on light vehicle registration. Major expenses this year include \$70,000 for the mobile veterans' service office, which is in the bid process; and \$100,000 paid to the DAV to purchase vans. Next fiscal year the major anticipated expenses will be another grant to the DAV, though it should not exceed \$48,000.

Board member Charlie Crookshanks gave a briefing on "Veteran" license plate sales, featuring a study showing the percentage of veterans in each county who purchased "Veteran" plates in 2005. Discussed were observations that most veterans do not know that the revenue generated from "Veteran" plate sales goes to

operate and maintain the state's veterans cemetery. Charlie talked about a couple of ways to generate more plate sales, including increasing the plate's \$10 surcharge. No action was taken on this concept. Charlie asked that all the Board members work to get the word out in their area, encouraging veterans to buy more plates. Joe Foster stated that purchasing newspaper ads promoting "Veteran" plate sales was very expensive and would not be pursued.

During the 2003 Legislative Session, legislation was passed for a new "Patriotic" license plate that can be purchased by anyone. The plate will cost \$15.00 and the proceeds are earmarked for the division's veterans' services programs. Lt. Governor John Bohlinger will be leading a design contest, which will be planned during a Feb. 7 meeting with representatives of the State of Montana's Office of Public Instruction and Motor Vehicle Division, and the state's various veterans service organizations. Veterans and Montana's K-12 school students will be specifically invited to submit design ideas. The design contest is open to all Montanans. A selection committee will identify preferred designs, and forward them to the Board of Veterans' Affairs for final selection. The plate should be ready for sale by the end of the summer.

Board member Kelly Williams (Department of Public Health and Human Services – Long-Term Care Division) gave a briefing on a study to be conducted that will assess the long-term care needs of Montana veterans, including the viability of pursuing a third state veterans nursing home. The study will assess home care options and community services; as well as the current facilities in Columbia Falls and Glendive. The report will be presented to the Legislative Finance Committee in September 2006.

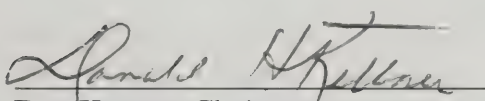
The Montana National Guard will be holding a "Job Fair" for returned soldiers on February 8, 2006 in Helena at the Armed Forces Reserve Center. The Montana Veterans' Affairs Division will participate by sponsoring a table and offering veteran benefits services.

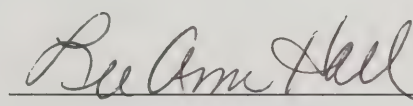
For the 2007 Legislative Session, the division has initially submitted three budget proposals to the Governor's Office: increasing the spending authority \$100,000 to account for operational expense at the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery; increase the Montana State Veterans Cemetery and Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery's plot allowance spending authority; and establish plot allowance and donation accounts and accompanying spending authority for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery. A New Proposal action submitted would authorize selected military ribbons to be allowed on the "Veteran" license plates. Also, a federal legislative recommendation was forwarded to Montana's Congressional Delegation supporting the National American Indian Veterans, Inc. efforts to attain Congressionally-chartered status as a veterans service organization.

Polly LaTray gave a briefing on training programs sponsored by the Department of Labor, and provided handouts.

After discussion, the next Board meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m., May 18, 2006 in Great Falls; location to be determined.

With no further business, the Board meeting was adjourned at 10 p.m.


Don Kettner, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS MEETING MINUTES

- May 18, 2006 -

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Kettner at 6 p.m., May 18, 2006 in Great Falls, with the following individuals present:

Don Kettner, Chairman
Bob Pavlovich, Vice Chairman
Ed Sperry, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Jim Heffernan, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Sen. Joe Tropila, Member
Kelly Williams, Member
Keith Heavyrunner, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member

Polly LaTray, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member
Maj. Gen. Randy Mosley, Member
Sarah Converse, Sen. Burns
Bonnie Keller, Sen. Baucus
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Admin. Specialist
Don Bogut, Member
Teresa Bell, Member

Chairman Don Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. Chairman Kettner made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Board member Charlie Crookshanks so moved and Board member Bob Pavlovich seconded the motion; motion was carried.

Joe presented the operations report: Michael Cohan has been hired to replace Bonnie Curran in the Miles City office. To date, our veteran service officers are responsible for bringing in over \$89 million worth of benefits for veterans and their family members. These benefits include disability compensation, pension and burial benefits; but do not include VA home loans or medical/dental services. Comparing to 2001, the service officers were responsible for \$43 million. Also that year, there were 279 new compensation claims submitted to the federal VA. In comparison, in 2005, there were 1098 new compensation claims submitted; and to date in 2006, we have 1088 new compensations claims have been submitted – with two 2 months remaining in the fiscal year. These figures reflect the productivity and workload of the division's veterans' service officers.

The bids came back for the mobile veterans service van, with the lowest bid being \$97,000 and the highest bid approximately \$130,000 – far too expensive. We have gone back to our contacting office and will have them look at this process again and see where the problem is – the cost should be in the \$60,000 range.

Board member Heavyrunner asked Joe about the power of attorney (POA) process. Joe explained that we take POA's for Montana Veterans Affairs and the American Legion. Joe explained that we go with the American Legion as we need to have a National Service Organization represent our client if the claim is elevated to an appeal process. Further, and very significantly, Joe is able to measure the financial impact – e.g., productivity – of our veterans' service offices by limiting POA to either the division or, as needed, the American Legion. The other veterans service organizations already have a representative at Ft. Harrison, and veterans have the choice to use whosever services they wish. In practice, the great majority of Montana veterans utilize the Montana Veterans' Affairs Division's.

Joe provided a "veteran" license plate report. Currently, we have sold 159 more plates this year than last. Seventy-four of this increase of 159 belong to Missoula County. Congratulations to boardmember Crookshanks and his efforts to inform the Missoula-area veterans about the "veteran" plate. We have had a steady increase in "veteran" license plate sales, even though there are at least 52 other specialty plates available.

The expansion planning process has started at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery. The new section will include a 50,000 gallon water tank, another well, columbarium and some new roads. This is planned to be constructed in four years, and will cost approximately \$1.2 million. It will be funded through a federal grant.

Our guest speaker for the Montana State Veterans Cemetery's May 30 Memorial Day ceremony will be Colonial John Walsh. Joe will be attending the Memorial Day ceremony at the Eastern Montana State Veterans' Cemetery in Miles City on the 29th.

Joe and Ralph DeCunzo had a conference call with the Federal VA folks concerning the project design of the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery (WMSVC). The final design should be forwarded to the VA in about two weeks. The project manager at the VA has stated that we won't be receiving the construction grant until sometime between June and late September this year. If this is the case, then we may not be able to have the dedication ceremony on Memorial Day of 2007, as previously planned. If so, we will make sure we get another date that will fit into the Governor's schedule. However, we do expect that the cemetery will be operational by late summer or early fall 2007.

Joe attended a meeting in Laurel concerning the proposed veterans cemetery in Yellowstone County that was authorized by the 2005 Legislature, as funding allows. Joe provided a break-out of expenses and revenue of the state veterans cemetery program. This breakout includes the new WMSVC and shows that we do not have the revenue at this time to operate a fourth state veterans cemetery. Even if Montana's veterans cemetery program's revenue is increased to afford a fourth state veterans cemetery, obtaining a federal VA grant will be very difficult. This is due to higher priority locations in other states, existing backlog of approved grant requests, limited VA cemetery program budget, and the fact that Montana will already have three operating state veterans cemeteries – which will be more than any other state west of the Mississippi River, except for Missouri and Hawaii.

Senator Tropila talked with Dean Roberts with the Justice Department about have a combined college and veteran plate. Dean said he will look into it.

General Mosley asked about having county cemeteries. Joe responded that many cemeteries do have areas exclusive for veterans burial; however, they are often private cemeteries and charge for the plot. The VA will not pay a plot allowance if the cemetery is already charging for that plot. General Mosley stated that Joe's idea regarding Yellowstone County building and operating a veterans' cemetery – and not charging for the plot, thus being eligible for the VA's plot allowance – was interesting and perhaps a good option for other interested counties to consider.

Buck Richardson, with the Federal VA, talked about an issue that may be arising from the Montana State Prison regarding the burial of veteran prisoners. Joe stated that we would address it once he has some specifics.

During the 2003 Legislative Session, legislation was passed for a new "Patriotic" license plate that can be purchased by anyone. The plate will cost \$15.00 and the proceeds are earmarked for the division's veterans' services programs. Lt. Gov. John Bohlinger led the design contest which brought in 57 submissions from veterans, Montana's K thru 12 school students, and interested citizens. The design contest was open to all Montanans. The design committee narrowed the 57 submissions down to four, which were then sent to the Montana State Prison for development into an actual license plate. These four finalists were presented to the board and all attendees, and everyone was asked to vote for their favorite. The winning design was submitted by Mr. Mark Garber of Centerville, and that plate is expected to be available for purchase in July 2007. All proceeds will be deposited into the division's veterans' services special revenue account. The four finalists

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will be invited to lunch with the Lt. Governor, where they will each receive a framed version of the design submitted; as well as, savings bonds sponsored by the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Sarah Converse, field representative for Senator Burns, reported that Senator Burns will introduce a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide financial support for veterans service organizations that support funeral ceremonies. The senator has also inserted an amendment into the defense supplemental appropriations bill that will streamline voting for military personnel serving the country overseas. The amendment would establish the Interim Voting Assistance System (IVAS) that would allow local governments to upload military absentee ballots to a secure Department of Defense server where soldiers could download, print, fill out and return the ballot by mail, saving a significant amount of time over the current system.

Chairman Kettner made a proposal to the Board that instead of designating "Town Hall meeting" on the formal agenda, we replace it with "public input." Member Crookshanks moved the motion and member Pavolvich seconded the motion. Motion was carried.

There was much discussion about getting more veterans to the Board meetings. This issue will be on the next Board meeting agenda.

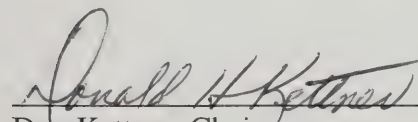
We currently have two vacant board positions.

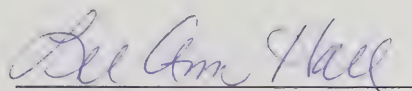
On May 29, 2006 the Marine Corp League will be having their annual dinner in Butte. May 29th is the dedication of the Veterans Memorial in Great Falls. The First Special Services Force will be having their annual convention August 16, 17 and 18.

Joe presented Don Bogut with a plaque for his years of service with the Board, including a two-year term as chairman.

After discussion, the next Board meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m., October 19, 2006 in Miles City – to be held the same day as the Eastern Montana Cemetery Advisory Council meeting. A tour of the cemetery will be conducted that afternoon.

With no further business, the Board meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.


Don Kettner, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

October 19, 2006

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Kettner at 7 p.m., October 19, 2006 in Miles City; with the following individuals present:

Don Kettner, Chairman
Bob Pavlovich, Vice Chairman
Harry LaFriniere, Member
Mary Creech, Member
Jim Heffernan, Member
Thomas Huddleston, Member
Sen. Joe Tropila, Member
Kelly Williams, Member
Keith Heavyrunner, Member

Teresa Bell, Member
Don Slavens, Sen. Baucus
Sylvia Beals, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Admin. Specialist

Chairman Don Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, and thanked everyone for their attendance.

Since there were several new members at this board meeting, each person introduced him/herself and told a little about their background. The new board members are Harry LaFriniere – Florence, replacing Don Bogut; Mary Creech – Butte, replacing Karen Furu; Sylvia Beals – Forsyth, replacing Ray Tindall; and Thomas Huddleston – Helena; replacing Ed Sperry. Board members who have been reappointed for a four-year term are: Sen. Joe Tropila, representing the State Administration and Veterans Affairs Interim Committee; Kelly Williams, representing the Department of Public Health and Human Services; and Teresa Bell, representing the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Chairman Kettner made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Board member Bob Pavlovich so moved, and board member Jim Heffernan seconded the motion; motion was carried. Chairman Kettner stated it was great that board members had the opportunity to attend the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery Advisory Council Meeting held earlier that day, and welcomed members of the advisory council who were able to attend the board meeting.

For the division's operational update, Joe Foster briefed the new members on the Montana Veterans' Affairs Division's biennial report; stating that this report provides an overview of what the division has accomplished the past two years; as well as an overview of what the board is, its composition and mission. The board is now 100% filled with the addition of the four new members. The division now has 10 service offices – with the recent addition of one in Lewistown. This office's service area was previously served by service offices in Belgrade, Billings and Great Falls. We expect a much greater efficiency in veterans' services throughout central Montana with the addition of this office.

Joe next explained that the division has a web site. It lists the division's mission, initiatives, locations of the ten veterans' service offices – with their points of contact, address, phone number, email address, and outreach schedule. To access this web site, one only needs to type in "Montana Veterans Affairs."

Joe discussed the division's organizational chart, which shows 23 full time positions. Presently, we have three administrative office positions, three in the cemetery program, and 17 veterans service officers located throughout the state.

Joe next addressed the 2000 census which shows over 108,000 veterans and 162,000 family members in Montana. Montana's veteran population is the second highest in the nation – per capita. We have had absolute support from the legislature and governor's office.

At the end of Fiscal Year 2006, our veteran service offices were responsible for bringing in over \$105 million worth of benefits for veterans and their family members. These benefits include, but are not limited to, disability compensation, pension and burial benefits; but do not include such benefits as VA home loans or VA medical/ dental services. This well exceeds Fiscal Year 2005's total of \$83 million. To date for this current fiscal year, we are at approximately \$29 million; compared to last year's total of approximately \$20 million, at this time.

For the cemetery update, Joe reported that we have sold 15,623 "veteran" license plates, statewide. This is 505 more than last year at this time. The revenue generated from the sales is used exclusively to operate the cemeteries. At the end of Fiscal Year 2006, there have been 1928 burials at the veterans cemetery at Fort Harrison; and 165 burials at the veterans cemetery in Miles City.

The federal grant to build the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Miles City is now totally expended. A fence was constructed around the pump system, and the road to the maintenance building was paved. Future improvements to the cemetery will be paid for by the veterans cemetery special revenue account.

Joe reported that once the VA grant is received for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery to be located in Missoula, we will begin design work to add a Section D to the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison. This project will also include a columbarium, new roads and water system – including a water tank. We now have approximately \$200,000 in the cemetery special revenue account, which is used to maintain the cemeteries. We will be asking for a reimbursement of approximately \$350,000 from the Federal Cemetery Grants program once the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery grant is approved. This amount represents required investment in design and environmental studies for the Missoula cemetery. The federal VA grant for the cemetery will be approximately \$3.2 million.

Joe explained that the Yellowstone County Commissioners have a mill levy on the November ballot that would reportedly generate \$225,000 a year to fund a veterans cemetery in the county. If the mill levy passes and the project is

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developed and managed as professionally as we believe it will, it will serve as a great model for other cities in Montana that may want to construct their own veterans cemetery – in that it is expected to be financially self-sustaining. He further explained that the division does not have the revenue to support the operations and maintenance for a prospective fourth state veterans cemetery – we can “afford” three, which includes the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula. With three state veterans cemetery, the program’s revenue and expenditures will be essentially the same. This has been explained to Yellowstone County Commissioners and veterans service organizations. If operated accordingly, the Yellowstone County veterans cemetery will also be able to receive the \$300 VA plot allowance, per internment; which will further augment their cemetery’s financial stability.

Buck Richardson, the VA’s minority veterans program coordinator, introduced Tribal Nations’ veterans program managers attending the board meeting. Buck talked about the VA’s Tribal Veterans Representative (TVR) program. The TVR’s are not “veterans’ service officers,” but work with the division’s service officers. This program has been adopted by the VA as a national model, and he is currently working with 23 Tribal Nations in his area of responsibility.

Joe reported that the “patriot” license plate, authorized by the 2003 Legislature, is now for sale. Joe sent a letter to all the state’s newspapers informing the readers that the “patriot” license plates are available for purchase in their counties. Colorized pictures of the plate were provided the board members for their distribution. The cost for one of these plates is \$15, though the initial buy also includes an additional, one-time \$15 administrative fee. The \$15 plate fee revenue is dedicated to the division’s veterans’ service programs.

Joe and the board reviewed some of the Legislative bills that are being considered for the 2007 Session. Member Pavlovich talked about constructing a state veterans nursing home in Southwest Montana using cigarette tax revenue. Sen. Troplia talked about a bill he is introducing will keep anyone picketing a military funeral 1500 feet from the property line. In November, Joe will notify the veterans’ service organizations and board members about having a coordination meeting to prepare for the upcoming session.

Alvy Chapman, State Commander of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) service organization thanked the Board for providing the DAV grants used to purchase 12 additional transport vans. Alvy stated there is a need for additional vans and appreciates future support. Dick McCrackin, DAV veteran transport coordinator in Billings, answered questions regarding ride coordination, and provided the contact number – 1-888-461-5000, extension 2143.

Member Tom Huddleston talked about the civic television stations located in eight Montana communities, and how they might assist the division in providing information to the public. He will get Joe the contact information.

Another issue Tom talked about was the VA having a sweat lodge on the Fort Harrison VA Center's campus, with involvement by both the National Guard and Reserve commands. Tom feels this is a very important therapeutic tool for American Indian veterans. Tom provided some background about the sweat lodge and its significance to Native culture. Discussion ensued with Buck Richardson, who explained that the different nations have different ways of using the sweat lodges. Tom will write up an information paper on his initiative, and the board will use it in developing a letter of support to be sent to the Fort Harrison VA Center. Sen. Tropila made a motion that the board support this initiative, which was seconded by Mr. Huddleston. The board voted in favor, and will await member Huddleston's information paper.

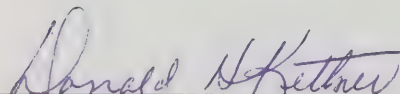
Member Heavyrunner stated that next month (November) is Native American month.

Teresa Bell announced that the Kalispell VA Clinic will be changing locations to a larger facility in December. At the Fort Harrison VA Center, the new specialty care addition will open in March, and the new Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) building will be open in December. The Liberty House dedication was held in September. Once the phone lines are installed, it will be open for usage; but the lines are tied in with the VBA building's systems.

Sen. Tropila reported that the new veterans memorial in Great Falls has been exceptionally well received, and plans are underway for its expansion.

After discussion, the next board meeting is scheduled for 2 p.m., March 8, 2007 at Fort Harrison. The meeting will focus on legislative issues.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.


Don Kettner, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

March 6, 2007

The Montana Board of Veterans' Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Kettner at 2 p.m., March 6, 2007 in Helena; with the following individuals present:

Don Kettner, Chairman
Bob Pavlovich, Vice Chairman
Harry LaFriniere, Member
Mary Creech, Member
Reno Charette, Member
Thomas Huddleston, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Kelly Williams, Member
Keith Heavysrunner, Member
Teresa Bell, Member
Maj. Gen. Randy Mosley, Member

Larry Anderson, Congressman Rehberg
Don Slavens, Sen. Baucus
Sylvia Beals, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Admin. Specialist
Lawrence Kenmille, Guest
Steve Keim, Special Forces
James Dwyer, DVOP
Buck Richardson, VISN 19
Bill Lombardi, Sen. Tester
Bob Beals, Guest

Chairman Don Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. Chairman Kettner made a motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as written. Board member Bob Pavlovich so moved and Board member Keith Heavysrunner seconded the motion; motion was carried.

This being a Legislative informational meeting, Joe Foster briefed everyone on how to access the Legislative bills on line. Joe handed out the legislative bills for the Department of Military Affairs, but explained that we would only be discussing the bills specific to the Veterans Affairs Division.

Bills being discussed were:

HB96: Fund Veteran Cemetery Maintenance. AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING THE ESTABLISHMENT AND FUNDING OF STATE VETERANS' CEMETERIES; AUTHORIZING THE BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS TO DESIGNATE A COUNTY VETERANS' CEMETERY AS A STATE VETERANS' CEMETERY SUBJECT TO BOARD CERTIFICATION; ESTABLISHING AN ACCOUNT FOR STATE REIMBURSEMENT OF COUNTY MAINTENANCE COSTS.

HB179: Create Montana military family relief fund. AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MONTANA MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF FUND; CREATING AN ACCOUNT IN THE STATE SPECIAL REVENUE FUND FOR USE BY THE FUND; AUTHORIZING THE AWARD OF STATUS-BASED, NEEDS-BASED, AND CASUALTY-BASED GRANTS; ESTABLISHING INELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR GRANTS; REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS TO ADOPT RULES TO IMPLEMENT AND ADMINISTER THE FUND; PROVIDING FOR A VOLUNTARY INCOME TAX CHECKOFF FOR THE FUND; PROVIDING A STATUTORY APPROPRIATION; PROVIDING A TRANSFER OF FUNDS TO THE FUND; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE AND AN APPLICABILITY DATE."

HB274: Allow certain recreational vehicles to have personalized veteran's license plate. AN ACT ALLOWING SPECIAL MILITARY OR VETERAN LICENSE PLATES TO BE ISSUED FOR TRAVEL TRAILERS OR TRAILERS.

HB294: Soldier appreciation scholarships. AN ACT CREATING THE SOLDIER APPRECIATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; PROVIDING SCHOLARSHIPS TO ELIGIBLE VETERANS; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS, PROCEDURES, AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

HB637: Provide income tax exemption for military service. AN ACT EXEMPTING FROM INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAXATION THE SALARY RECEIVED BY A MONTANA RESIDENT UNDER TITLE 10 OR 32 OF THE UNITED STATES CODE AND THE SALARY RECEIVED BY A RESIDENT MEMBER OF THE STATE MILITIA WHILE ON DUTY IN CONNECTION WITH A STATE-DECLARED DISASTER OR EMERGENCY.

HB740: State purchase of military headstones. AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A MILITARY HEADSTONE FOR CERTAIN VETERANS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

HB773: Require state to pay for certain veterans funerals. AN ACT PROVIDING STATE REIMBURSEMENT OF CERTAIN COUNTY PAYMENTS FOR VETERANS' INTERMENT COSTS; REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS TO REIMBURSE COUNTIES FOR INTERMENT COSTS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

HB788: Revise veterans war bonus program. AN ACT PROVIDING AN HONORARIUM FOR MONTANA RESIDENTS WHO SERVE IN A CONTINGENCY OPERATION; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; PROVIDING FOR THE CALCULATION OF THE HONORARIUM; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

HB288: Depleted uranium testing for certain veterans. AN ACT PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN MONTANA NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS IN OBTAINING HEALTH SCREENINGS FOR DEPLETED URANIUM; REQUIRING A REPORT ON PREDEPLOYMENT TRAINING ON HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A RETROACTIVE APPLICABILITY DATE.

HB803: Board of veterans' affairs education program on depleted uranium. AN ACT PROVIDING THAT THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION PROGRAM OF THE BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS MAY INCLUDE INFORMATION RELATED TO DEPLETED URANIUM EXPOSURE.

SB15: Prohibit picketing at funerals. AN ACT PROHIBITING THE PICKETING OF FUNERALS UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES; PROVIDING PENALTIES; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND AN APPLICABILITY DATE.

SB21: Allow counties to establish and fund veterans' cemeteries. AN ACT AUTHORIZING COUNTIES TO ESTABLISH AND FUND VETERANS' CEMETERIES.

SB30: Allow combination purple heart and disabled veteran license plates. AN ACT ALLOWING A QUALIFIED VETERAN TO BE ISSUED SPECIAL COMBINATION DISABLED VETERAN AND PURPLE HEART LICENSE PLATES.

SB136: Revise meeting frequency for Board of Veteran's Affairs. AN ACT REVISING THE MEETING FREQUENCY OF THE BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SB235: Establish SW Montana veterans' home - use 2 cents cigarette tax money. AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SOUTHWESTERN MONTANA STATE VETERANS' HOME IN BEAVERHEAD, DEER LODGE, JEFFERSON, MADISON, POWELL, OR SILVER BOW COUNTY; ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR OF VETERANS FROM THOSE COUNTIES TO DESIGNATE THE LOCATION; ALLOCATING 2

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CENTS PER PACK OF CIGARETTE TAX MONEY TO AN ACCOUNT FOR USE IN CONSTRUCTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN MONTANA STATE VETERANS' HOME SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION BY THE 61ST LEGISLATURE.

SB403: Revise property tax exemption for disabled veterans. AN ACT INCREASING THE AMOUNT OF LAND INCLUDED IN THE DISABLED OR DECEASED VETERANS' RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION TO LAND NOT TO EXCEED 5 ACRES FROM A LOT; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A RETROACTIVE APPLICABILITY DATE."

SB440: Revise membership of workforce investment boards--add military veteran. AN ACT REQUIRING A MILITARY VETERAN IN THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

LC1140: Service ribbon decals on veteran's license plates. AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE PLACEMENT OF SERVICE RIBBON DECALS ON VETERANS' LICENSE PLATES.

LC1653: Fund construction of veterans home. AN ACT APPROPRIATING GENERAL FUND MONEY FOR A CAPITAL PROJECT TO CONSTRUCT A STATE VETERANS' NURSING HOME IN DEER LODGE, MONTANA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE

LC2017: Exempt military pensions from state income tax. AN ACT EXEMPTING MILITARY PENSION OR RETIREMENT INCOME AND SURVIVOR BENEFITS FROM INCOME TAXATION; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A RETROACTIVE APPLICABILITY DATE."

Next on the agenda was the discussion on the Sweat Lodge brought forth by Board member Tom Huddleston. Guests Laurence Kenmille and Buck Richardson spoke on the issues of having a Sweat Lodge constructed at Ft. Harrison. The Board is willing to support a Sweat Lodge at Ft. Harrison, but made note that this is a Federal VA issue.

After discussion, the next board meeting is scheduled May 22, 2007 in Billings or Laurel. The Board will tour the proposed veteran cemetery near Laurel and then proceed with the Board meeting.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.



Don Kettner, Chairman



Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

May 22, 2007

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Bob Pavlovich at 1:30 p.m., May 22, 2007 in Laurel; with the following individuals present:

Bob Pavlovich, Vice Chairman
Harry LaFriniere, Member
Sylvia Beals, Member
Maj. Gen. Randy Mosley, Member
Thomas Huddleston, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Keith Heavrunner, Member
Joe Tropila, Member

Harvey Rattey, Member
Larry Anderson, Congressman Rehberg
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Admin. Specialist
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
James Heffernan, Member
Jed Fitch, Sen. Tester

Vice-Chairman Bob Pavlovich opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the minutes as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion was so moved and seconded; the motion carried.

For the division's operational update, Joe Foster provided the members the Montana Veterans Affairs Division's financial report. To date, veteran service officers in 10 office locations have brought in \$98,488,367 of federal VA dollars for veterans and their family members. Last year's year-end total was \$104,715,627. The great majority of these monetary awards come from disability compensation and pension claims. The report also shows how much each service office is responsible for.

For the cemetery update, Joe reported that we have, to date, sold 16,064 "veteran" license plates. This is a solid figure considering the competition with the state's other specialty plates, which number over 80. The division's new "Patriot" license plate has sold 708 plates, as of the end of February. The revenue generated from the sale of veteran license plates is used exclusively to operate the state veterans cemeteries, and the sale of the patriot plates is used for the division's veterans services program.

Mr. Foster provided the board a copy of the letter Chairman Kettner provided Mr. Joe Underkofler, director of the VA Montana Healthcare System, supporting the concept of a sweat lodge being located on the VA's Fort Harrison campus. Board member Tom Huddleston stated that medical documents supporting such an effort are currently under review at the VA.

The division has 23 full-time positions and all are full. The latest hire was a service officer for the newly created veterans service office in Lewistown, who is now fully accredited and certified to work veterans' claims. This last legislative session provided the authority to hire two additional full-time veteran service officers, and is effective July 1, 2007. A new service office in Wolf Point or Glasgow will be established, with the location based upon appropriate office

space; and the other position will be place in Havre – making it a two-person office. These two positions should significantly enhance services to veterans and their family members throughout the highline area. It will also have a positive impact on the Miles City service office's outreach program.

Mr. Foster then recognized Veterans Service Officer I, Dorothy Jarosz, of the Billings service office. Dorothy was recognized for outstanding service and presented a \$200 cash award.

Joe then gave an update on bills that passed during the 2007 legislative session and impact veteran benefits:

House Bill 96. This bill authorizes counties that operate a veterans-only cemetery the ability to request that it be designated a "state" veterans cemetery. To attain this designation, the county must be authorized by the state legislature to have a state veterans cemetery, and the cemetery must be certified by the Board of Veterans Affairs as meeting National Cemetery Administration standards – designated as "National Shrine Standards." This is unique concept and may be the only program like it in the nation.

House Bill 274. This bill allows travel trailers and trailers to have the veteran license plate.

House Bill 592. This bill allocates \$10,000 to the Department of Transportation to erect highway signs for the veteran memorial located in Great Falls.

House Bill 803. This bill requires the Board to initiate an educational program regarding depleted uranium. The division has already complied with this legislation by posting comprehensive information about depleted uranium on its website.

Senate Bill 15. This bill prohibits protests/picketing at deceased military personnel's funeral services. These type actions are prohibited from one hour before through one hour after the service, and the protest/picketing must be at least 1500 feet away from the service. This bill was sponsored by board member, State Senator Joe Tropila.

Senate Bill 21. This bill allows counties to fund, construct and operate a county cemetery designated specifically for veterans, as authorized through a voted mill levy. This bill complements House Bill 96. Yellowstone County has already passed this mill levy, and is expected to generate \$225,000 per year for its planned veterans cemetery.

Senate Bill 30. This bill allows the addition of the Purple Heart medal onto the disabled veteran license plate. There is no cost for the veteran.

Senate Bill 136. This bill revises the required meeting frequency of the Board of Veterans Affairs, reducing it from four meetings per year to three. Additional meetings can still take place as needed or as called by the chairman.

Senate Bill 403. This bill revises the property tax waiver/reduction for disabled veterans who are rated 100% disabled or are paid at the 100% disabled rate, increasing the amount of land included in the waiver/reduction from one acre, plus the residence, to five acres. The waiver/reduction is based upon marital status and income.

Senate Bill 440. This bill revised the State Workforce Investment Board's membership to specifically include a military veteran.

Yellowstone County Commissioner Bill Kennedy provided an update on the planned Yellowstone County veterans cemetery. Commissioner Kennedy stated that 17½% of the state's veterans reside in Yellowstone County. He provided the history to the project and the process by which the mill levy was passed. The cemetery will be located adjacent to the City of Laurel's cemetery, and they are working very aggressively to have construction groundbreaking by Memorial Day 2008.

Mr. Foster then briefed the board on the status of the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery to be located in Missoula. Thanks to personal involvement by Montana's Congressional Delegation – specifically, Sen. Tester – we have now received the letter authorizing the project to go to bid. Pending resolution of a water rights issue, we anticipate the bid process to be initiated mid-summer, with groundbreaking expected to take place in the Fall. Board member Charlie Crookshanks was recognized as instrumental in resolving the water rights issue, which was based upon the area being part of a "closed" water basin.

Mr. Crookshanks informed everyone that on June 14, 1997, the Korean War Memorial in Missoula was dedicated, and a 10th anniversary ceremony will be held June 16. The South Korean ambassador to the United States will be the featured guest and speaker.

Board member, Maj. Gen. Randy Mosley, updated the board on the Post Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) Task Force. This task force was assembled to analyze the Guard's PDHRA program – which is designed to assist Guardsmen, who were federally activated and deployed during the Global War on Terror – reintegrate into civilian society once released from active duty. Based upon analyzing the program, the task force is to develop recommendations intended to improve the program and its processes. Over 80% of the Montana National Guard's soldiers and airmen have been activated since 2001. Joe Foster is the chairman for this committee.

The federal Department of Veterans Affairs has announced relocation of its clinic in Sidney to Glendive, and will be located in the Eastern Montana State Veterans Nursing Home. Long-term difficulties in adequate staffing at the Sidney location prompted the move. Sidney-area veterans will have to travel to Glendive for their medical services or travel to the VA clinic located in Williston, N.D.

Board member Keith Heavyrunner briefed the board on "Operation Glacier Warrior," which is an innovative support and activities weekend for veterans – particularly those who are experiencing emotional/mental health issues resultant of combat duty. The event will take place July 27-29 at Lower St. Mary Lake.

Mr. Foster stated that the Veterans Affairs Division will be providing a \$1000 grant to help support the event.

Member Tom Huddleston informed the board that Governor Schweitzer appointed him to the Montana Council on Homelessness. He also talked about the "Vet to Vet" program.

Vice-Chairman Pavlovich reminded Board members of the opportunity to tour the Yellowstone County veterans cemetery location immediately after the board meeting. The tour will be conducted by Commissioner Kennedy.

After discussion, the next board meeting was scheduled for 2 p.m., September 27, 2007 in Butte.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.



Don Kettner, Chairman



Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

September 27, 2007

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Kettner at 2 p.m., September 27, 2007 in Butte; with the following individuals present:

Don Kettner, Chairman
Bob Pavlovich, Vice Chairman
Sylvia Beals, Member
Maj. Gen. Randy Mosley, Member
Thomas Huddleston, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member
Joe Tropila, Member
Jim Dwyer, Member

Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Mike Waite, Congressman Rehberg
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Admin. Specialist
Harry LaFriniere, Member
Don Slavens, Senator Baucus
Connie Daniels, Sen. Tester
Mary Creech, Member
Sylvia Beals, Member

Chairman Don Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the minutes as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Chairman Kettner recognized those on the Board who have been reappointed. They are: Charlie Crookshanks, Lloyd Jackson, Bob Pavlovich, Harvey Rattey and Jim Heffernan. Joe Foster was also recognized for winning the Governor's Award for Excellence.

For the division's operational update, Joe Foster provided the members the Montana Veterans Affairs Division's financial report. For fiscal year 2007, veteran service officers in 10 office locations have brought in approximately \$114 million of federal VA dollars for veterans and/or their family members. This figure does not reflect such things as federal VA medical services or home loans.

For the cemetery update, Joe reported that for this calendar year, we have sold 14,010 "Veteran" license plates. Joe is confident that we should sell 20,000 plates before the end of the calendar year. Last year's sales were 19,932. This is a solid figure considering the competition with the state's other specialty plates, which number over 80. The division's new "Patriot" license plate has sold 1723 through the end of May 2007. The revenue generated from the sale of Veteran license plates is used exclusively to operate the state veterans cemeteries, and the sale of the Patriot plates is used for the division's veterans services program.

With the last legislative session, we were authorized two additional full-time positions. As of today, we have 25 authorized full-time positions – of which 24 are filled. We currently have a vacancy in the Helena veterans service office. With the addition of the two FTE's, we have established a new veterans service office in Wolf Point. The other position has been placed in Havre – making it a two-person office. These two positions should significantly enhance services to

veterans and their family members throughout the highline area and eastern quarter of the state. Joe explained the division's new organizational chart that shows the newly revised outreach areas.

Joe introduced David Williamson to the Board as the new service officer recently hired in the Butte office, replacing Kevin Stone. David's outreach services include the Montana State Prison, the Montana State Hospital, and the WATCH program in Warm Springs.

Member Tom Huddleston asked Joe to explain the training process which takes place after a new service officer is hired. Joe explained how the new employee must be accredited, certified and undergo continual agency-sponsored training and mentorship by supervisory staff. Member Jim Dwyer asked to be invited to the next training session.

Mr. Foster then briefed the board on the status of the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery to be located in Missoula. The \$4.1 million grant awardance letter has been received. We can now award the bid to Quality Construction in Missoula. The next function will be a ground-breaking ceremony to take place in mid-November. The cemetery should be operational in the Fall of 2008.

Board member Maj. Gen. Randy Mosley updated the board on the Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) Task Force. This task force was assembled to analyze the Guard's PDHRA program – which is designed to assist Guardsmen who were federally activated and deployed during the Global War on Terror reintegrate into civilian society once released from active duty. Based upon analyzing the program, the task force developed recommendations intended to improve the program and its processes. General Mosley stated that over 80% of the Montana National Guard's soldiers and airmen have been activated since 2001. Based upon the PDHRA Task Force's report, Maj. Gen. Mosley directed his staff to develop a Campaign Plan to plan implementation of all recommendations. This Campaign Plan is near completion and once finalized, will be will distributed the Board members.

The American Legion presented State Senator Joe Tropila a special recognition award for his hard work on Senate Bill 15 which prohibits protests/picketing at deceased military personnel's funeral services.

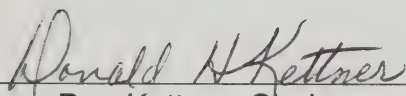
Member Huddleston talked about homelessness in Montana and requested some time at the next Board meeting to brief homelessness issues among veterans in Montana.


Elections were held for the Board's chairman and vice-chairman. Member Huddleston nominated Don Kettner for a second term as chairman, which was seconded by Member Harvey Rattey. Member Crookshanks nominated Bob Pavlovich for a second term as vice chairman, and which was seconded by Member Beals. Both were reappointed unanimously by the voting Board members.

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After discussion, the next board meeting was scheduled for 1 p.m., January 24th in Lewistown.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.


Don Kettner, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

January 24, 2008

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Kettner at 1 p.m., January 24, 2008 in Missoula; with the following individuals present:

Don Kettner, Chairman
Bob Pavlovich, Vice Chairman
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Maj. Gen. Randy Mosley, Member
Thomas Huddleston, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Jim Dwyer, Member
Joe Tropila, Member

Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Mary Creech, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Admin. Specialist
Harry LaFriniere, Member
Don Slavens, Senator Baucus
Jim Heffernan, Member

Keith Heavy Runner, Member
Kelly Williams, Member

Chairman Don Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. New Board member Jennifer Perez Cole, Coordinator for the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, was introduced and then departed due to a funeral she had to attend. Chairman Kettner asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the minutes as written. With no discussion or changes made, the motion was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

For the division's operational update, Joe Foster provided the members the Montana Veterans Affairs Division's financial report. As of January 2008, veteran service officers in 11 office locations have brought in \$57,979,390 of federal VA dollars for veterans and/or their family members. This figure does not reflect such things as federal VA medical services or home loans. As of today, the division has 25 authorized full-time positions – all are filled. The only projected vacancy will be Ruddy Reilly, who will be retiring effective July 1, 2008 after 40 years of service. In March, we will be sending five veterans service officers to the American Legion training in Washington, DC. This training will complete all initially required accreditation and certification training courses our veterans service officers are required to accomplish.

For the cemetery program update, Joe reported that for calendar year 2007 we sold 20,004 "Veteran" license plates. Last year's sales were 19,932. The division's new "Patriot" license plate sales are 1985, through January 2007.

Joe informed the Board about the 30-second public service announcement (PSA) that is airing on statewide radio stations informing the listeners of who to contact when seeking assistance regarding serious veteran mental health issues. This effort was funded through the division's \$5000 grant to the Montana Mental Health Association, and they will be airing through mid-March. Joe considered purchasing television PSAs, but found that they were far too expensive. Board member Huddleston said that he would assist Joe with producing a DVD which could be distributed to television stations, which could air the PSAs as a public

service. Senator Joe Tropila requested copies of the DVD for all the Board members to take to their stations, as well.

Joe then provided the Board a newspaper article written by Joe Underkofler, director of VA-Montana Healthcare Services, discussing the controversy created by a Washington, D.C. news service that provided inaccurate and misleading data regarding VA-Montana mental healthcare services. Joe then updated the Board as to the new VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) that is now operational in Cut Bank. Another CBOC is expected to open in Lewistown in late Spring 2008.

The Executive Planning Process (EPP) has begun, and the division is evaluating its budget and considering any new proposals that will be forwarded to the Governor. At this time, the intent is to request three additional full-time equivalents (FTEs), but we must ensure that our agency revenue can sustain the additional staff, long-term. The new positions, if approved, would be used as "Veterans Service Officers."

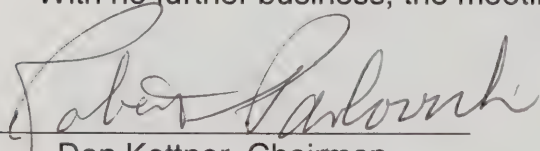
Len Leibinger and Melinda Buxton, our Veterans Service Officers in Missoula, were recognized by Joe. Joe stated that Len and Melinda's service office – currently located in the National Guard armory on Reserve Street – will be moved into the administration building at the new state veterans cemetery currently being constructed in Missoula.

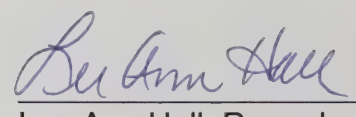
Mr. Foster then briefed the Board on the status of the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula. Construction began in early November 2007 and completion is expected in late August, 2008. The groundbreaking ceremony held in November was well attended; with Senator Tester, Congressman Rehberg, and many Missoula area civic leaders in attendance. The cemetery's dedication ceremony is tentatively scheduled for "Patriot Day," Sept. 11, 2008.

Board member Tom Huddleston and guest Sherrie Downing gave an in-depth briefing about homelessness in Montana. Mr. Rob Schmitt, the VA-Montana Healthcare System's homeless veteran coordinator and his predecessor, Ms. Pamela Mann, were recognized for their efforts to provide homeless veteran services. Also recognized were Buck Richardson and Jim Dwyer for their work addressing veteran homelessness. Board member Keith Heavyrunner provided a briefing regarding veteran service initiatives sponsored by the Blackfeet Tribal Nation.

After discussion, the next board meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2008 at 1 p.m. in Lewistown.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.


Don Kettner, Chairman
Vice Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

May 15, 2008

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Bob Pavlovich at 1 p.m., May 15, 2008 in Lewistown; with the following individuals present:

Bob Pavlovich, Vice-Chairman
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Sylvia Beals, Member
Mary Creech, Member
Thomas Huddleston, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member
Joe Tropila, Member
Teresa Bell, Member
Kelly Williams, Member

Keith Heavyrunner, Member
Harry LaFriniere, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Admin. Specialist
Jim Heffernan, Member
Jennifer Perez Cole, Member
Matt McCombs, Sen. Tester
Seth Broesder, Congressman Rehberg
Don Slavens, Senator Baucus

Vice-Chairman Bob Pavlovich opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the minutes as written. Board members Kelly Williams and Keith Heavyrunner reported being omitted from the January 2008 board meeting's minutes. Their attendance was duly noted. With no other changes discussed or made, the motion to approve last meeting's minutes was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Vice-Chairman Pavlovich then reported to the board that Chairman Don Kettner was unable to attend the meeting due to a serious accident he had, from which he is recovering.

For the division's operational update, Joe Foster provided the members the Montana Veterans Affairs Division's financial report. As of May 1, 2008, veteran service officers in 11 office locations have brought in \$95,230,574 of federal VA dollars for veterans and family members. This figure does not reflect such things as federal VA medical services or home loans; the great majority of the money being veteran disability compensation and pension payments. Also provided was the division's compilation of claim products developed by our veterans service offices. As of May 1, 2008, there were 3463 claim products submitted to the VA Regional office at Fort Harrison.

For the cemetery update, Joe reported that we have sold 20,004 "Veteran" license plates during calendar year 2007. To date this year, 6,202 have been sold; 88 plates of which sold in Fergus County. To date this fiscal year, the division's "Patriot" license plate has sold 2617, resulting in over \$39,000 of revenue into our veterans services program.

We currently have 25 authorized full-time positions. Ruddy Reilly will be retiring July 1, 2008 with 40 years of state service. Ruddy's position will be announced in the next couple of weeks.

In February, VA Secretary Peake visited the state and Joe was invited to participate in a "round-table" discussion. Joe provided the board members a letter outlining his recommendations to Secretary Peake regarding certain VA policies, benefits and care. Senator Tester was the host for this event, and Congressman Rehberg also attended.

Joe introduced Ms. Sue Foster to the Board as the new service officer in the recently established Lewistown service office, located at 505 West Main in the Bank Electric Building. Sue has accomplished the service officer accreditation and certification courses, and actively providing area veterans professional services.

Mr. Foster then briefed the board on the status of the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery to be located in Missoula. Construction began in November 2007, and completion is expected in late August 2008. We are still on track for a Dedication Ceremony to take place on September 11. Board member Charlie Crookshanks explained that the senior class at the high school in Frenchtown produced a very moving book about the Vietnam War, and the proceeds from the book sales are to be dedicated to the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery. Joe will write a letter to the class and invite them all to the dedication.

The Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Miles City is doing well. Recently, however, there has been some vandalism due to vehicles "swishing" around the memorial circle. This has been reported to the Sheriff's Office. Based upon discussion during the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery's Advisory Council meeting held in April, efforts to stop the vandalism include: engaging the Miles City Star to cover the vandalism; enlist Crimestoppers, encourage "Neighborhood Watch" involvement; prepare and place surveillance signs; and research security options. The cemetery's gate will be closed each day at sundown until the vandalism problem is resolved.

Teresa Bell explained that the Lewistown Community Based Out-patient Clinic (CBOC) should be open within the next two months. They have hired a primary health care physician, and the new clinic will be located at 629 NE Main. The new Cut Bank CBOC is up and running, and now seeing patients. This clinic is supported through a contract with the local hospital. The process is well underway to establish a CBOC in Havre. At this time, the VA is considering the Havre clinic being support through contract. Prospective opening will be this summer, with the hours of operations being 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Vice-Chairman Pavlovich talked about efforts for a legislative bill that would authorize moving forward in the process to construct a veterans nursing home in southwest Montana. Bob reported receiving an American Legion resolution supporting the resolution; however, the resolution's language included references to the Board of Veterans Affairs supporting the prospective bill. After discussion, Joe Foster recommended that the resolution language should be changed due to the Board's status as an Executive Branch Board. As such, the Board cannot initiate or support legislation unless given permission by Governor Schweitzer. After discussion, the board and attending American Legion representatives

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requested that Joe rewrite the pertinent portions of the resolution to ensure that the board not be referenced in the resolution. Joe said he would do so and send the recommended edits to Mr. Bob Beals of the American Legion. Board member Sylvia Beals suggested that the nursing home be built near a VA community based out-patient clinic.

Joe reported that this legislative session we will be requesting three additional full-time veteran service officer positions; to be placed in Billings, Helena, and a new office that would be opened in Polson. We are also requesting additional cemetery program funding to operate the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery. He reported that legislation is being proposed by veterans service organizations that would exempt military retirement pay from state income tax.

Joe reported that the 30-second radio public service announcement (PSA) providing information about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has run its course. This PSA was partnered with the Montana Mental Health Association. We are now working three new PSAs. One is a 60-second television spot that was produced by board member Tom Huddleston. It focuses on PTSD and the services provided by the Fort Harrison VA and the Montana Veterans Affairs Division. Joe provided the members with a DVD and introductory letter that they can take to their local TV stations to solicit their will run the spot. A 30-second television PSA focusing on PTSD is under development and is funded through the Department of Military Affairs. Also, a 30-second radio PSA focusing on traumatic brain injury is near completion. This PSA is funded through board member Kelly Williams' office with the Department of Public Health and Human Services' Long-Term Care Division.

The Montana National Guard is hosting community meetings in 20 different towns. We will have a service officer in every location except for Libby. Federal VA staff will also be in attendance. The meetings will focus on the Guard's post-deployment health reassessment program, and will specifically address PTSD, available mental health services, and will feature a DVD the Guard developed and produced. Joe stated that board member, Maj. Gen. Randy Mosley – commander of the Montana National Guard – has announced his retirement, effective September 5, 2008. Joe gave General Mosley great praise for all his leadership and work with the PTSD program.

Kelly Williams gave an update on her agency's teleconferences with communities across the state, which served as a precursor for her agencies development of legislative initiatives supporting long-term care. Most comments were in regard to rate increases for providers who deliver services, and expansion of community-based services. Kelly stated that they have developed budget requests for renovations at the veterans nursing homes in Glendive and Columbia Falls.

Member Teresa Bell talked about the following activities going on with VA-Montana health services.

<> Welcome home celebration at the Fort Harrison medical center for returning veterans. This will be done twice a year in the future.

<> Volunteers of America requested a \$500,000 grant to purchase a van and build a homeless veteran transitional shelter in Billings. If successful, the next area's considered for this grant will be Great Falls and Kalispell.

<> The VA sponsored Tribal Veteran Representative training at Fort Harrison. Sixty-two people were in attendance.

<> VA Secretary Peake's visit very successful, and he was provided important input from veterans and political leaders in both Billings and Helena.

<> A new web-site – www.montana.va.com – has been unveiled.

<> Homeless veteran standdowns will be starting in September.

<> Housing and Urban development has joined forces with the VA to assist the homeless veterans by establishing Section 8 housing vouchers.

<> A community-based out-patient clinic (CBOC) is planned to be operational in Ravalli County in 2009.

<> The movement of the CBOC from Sidney to Glendive, into the Eastern Montana State Veterans Home, has been very successful and beneficial to the region. Sidney-area veterans have the option to utilize the CBOC in Glendive or those in North Dakota.

Board member Charlie Crookshanks spoke of the Western Montana Military Officers Association in Missoula's program of sending care packages to the troops. This is conducted on a quarterly basis.

Senator Baucus, Senator Tester and Congressman Rehberg representatives gave a briefing on what legislation of veteran interest each senator/representative is currently working on.

The Memorial Day Ceremony at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison will be held May 30 at noon. General Mosley and Ron Koontz will be the featured speakers.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m. The next board meeting is scheduled for October 15, 2008 in Billings; the specific location to be determined. This meeting will also provide the board the opportunity to tour the Yellowstone County Veterans Cemetery currently being constructed.



Don Kettner, Chairman



Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

- MEETING MINUTES -

October 15, 2008

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Don Kettner at 1 p.m., October 15, 2008 in Billings; with the following individuals present:

Don Kettner, Chairman
Bob Pavlovich, Vice-Chairman
Jim Heffernan, Member
Mary Creech, Member
Tom Huddleston, Member
Harry LaFriniere, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member
Joe Tropila, Member

Brig. Gen. John Walsh, Member
Byron Erickson, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Admin. Specialist
Don Slavens, Senator Baucus
Matt McCombs, Senator Tester

Chairman Don Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the minutes, as written. With no other changes discussed or made, the motion to approve last meeting's minutes was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

New board members, Brig. Gen. John Walsh – Department of Military Affairs and Byron Erickson – U.S. Department of Labor, were introduced.

For the division's operational update, Joe Foster provided the members the Montana Veterans Affairs Division's financial report. For Fiscal Year 2008, the division's veteran service officers' work effort brought in \$113,570,669 of federal VA dollars for veterans and family members. This figure does not reflect such things as federal VA medical services or home loans; the great majority of the money being veteran disability compensation and pension payments. We used to receive the "out-of-state" (category) veteran claim award letters, which were included on this report; but through a two-year process, we have contacted these out-of-state veterans and advised them to transfer their Power of Attorney from the Montana Veterans Affairs Division to a service organization in the state they are now living. The intent was to ensure that these veterans receive proximate services – which are in their best interests. This effort has been successful and has resulted in the "out-of-state" category financial impact being zeroed-out. Typically, these are veterans who received our claim benefits services upon discharge from Malmstrom Air Force Base or at other locations throughout the state, and subsequently moved out of state.

A question was asked about what percent of the state's claim work is done by our division. Joe explained that we do about 65%. Regarding the remaining 35%, 20% of the claim work is submitted directly to the VA by the veterans themselves, and the remaining 15% is spread between the state's other veterans service organizations. Last fiscal year, approximately 4000 claim products were submitted to the Fort Harrison VA Regional Office by division service officers.

Our division positions are 100% filled. We recently hired a temporary employee for the newly opened Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula. We have a request this upcoming legislative session for two full-time cemetery employees. The cost of these two positions will be approximately \$75,000 and will be paid out of the cemetery program's special revenue account.

Joe reported that as of August, we have sold 841 fewer "Veteran" plates than last year at this time. "Veteran" license plate sales are the primary funding source for the state's three veteran cemeteries. This reduction in sales is attributed largely to the ever-expanding variety of specialty plates available for purchase. Member Huddleston asked how we publicize the "Veteran" plate. Joe said that we predominately depend upon the veterans service organizations to get the word out, and the 19,000+ "Veteran" plates seen on vehicles throughout the state. Two years ago we sent a "letter to the editor" to all the state's newspapers thanking the readers for purchasing "Veteran" plates, informing them of the state veterans cemetery program and encouraging veterans to purchase the plate. Joe stated that he is going to do this again.

Regarding the division's "Patriot" license plate, 3600 have been sold resulting in over \$54,000 of revenue into our veterans services program. The "Patriot" plate revenue is separate from the "Veteran" plate revenue and does not go into the cemetery program.

Bill Kennedy, Yellowstone County Commissioner, briefed the board on the Yellowstone County Veterans Cemetery; which is being constructed near Laurel. Mr. Kennedy introduced Ed Saunders and Burt Gigoux, who are on the cemetery's committee and will accompany board members on a cemetery tour after the meeting. Mr. Kennedy stated they plan a dedication ceremony on Veterans Day, with interments expected to start by the end of this year.

Construction has begun at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Ft. Harrison to expand the available interment area with a new "Section D." This area will be exclusively used for full-casket burials. We have invested approximately \$60,000 to build a road, put in an irrigation system, drill a new well, level the ground and hydroseed for turf. The expansion is necessary due to our projection of depleting existing plot availability for full-casket burials within three years. Section D will be available for use two years from now.

We have had another vandalism event at the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery. Most recently, an individual drove his vehicle through the security fence by the maintenance building – he was eventually caught and arrested. We have had to mandate the cemetery be closed after working hours, including weekends. We are pursuing a Miles City-area vendor to contract with for security services at the cemetery – we want full public access as soon as possible.

The new Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery is fully constructed, except for some finishing landscaping. A Dedication Ceremony was held on Patriot Day, attended by approximately 450 people. The cemetery was operational as of October 6 and the first burial was made October 7. We have hired one

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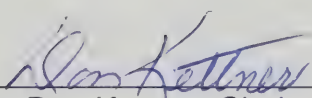
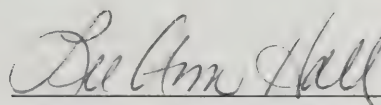
temporary state employee, Curt Aasved, who is managing the cemetery. We are pursuing two full-time positions this legislative session to fully man the cemetery.

Tribal Veterans Representative training took place October 9-10. This training was co-sponsored by the Governors Office on Indian Affairs and Montana Veterans Affairs Division. Boardmember Jennifer Perez Cole was key to making this event a reality, and it was very well received by all participants – which also included division veterans service officers who serve reservations in their outreach areas. This training is expected to be an annual event.

Boardmember Erickson brought up the issue of Native veterans with “bad” discharges, and suggested a study to determine whether or not Native veterans have a higher percentage of “bad” discharges than non-Native. Joe Foster stated that “bad” discharges are extremely difficult to be overturned, though the division’s veterans service officers do periodically pursue discharge upgrades. However, the issue presented – if there is an issue – resides with the Department of Defense; for it is the military that determines the discharges of its departing members. Further, it typically takes a pretty significant action by the military service member to result in receiving a bad discharge. Billings veterans service officer, Cheryl Heald, reported to the board that discharge upgrades are very difficult to accomplish and typically take years to do so – if ultimately successful. Brig. Gen. Walsh stated that he will direct an assessment of Montana National Guard discharge results to see if there are any indications or trends of Native Guardmembers receiving bad discharges at a higher rate than non-Natives. Boardmember Matthew McCombs suggested contacting his office (Sen. Tester) since Congressional involvement can expedite some of these cases. The board took no action on Mr. Erickson’s suggestion for a study of the issue.

Joe discussed the Governor’s “20x10” initiative which details the expectation that state government reduce its energy consumption by 20% by the year 2010. Joe said that the division’s veterans services program has analyzed its outreach activities and is finalizing changes which will comply with the Governor’s directives, while ensuring appropriate and active veterans outreach services. The board discussed utilizing video teleconferences (VTC) as a medium in holding future meetings. This would save significant travel expenses and fuel consumption – as well as board member time. However, it was decided that the next meeting should be in Helena due to the upcoming legislative session and expected discussion of bills impacting veterans services or programs.

Following discussion, the next board meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2009 in Helena. The State Administration and Veterans Affairs Interim Committee and other legislators will be invited. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.


Don Kettner, Chairman
Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

**MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
- MEETING MINUTES -
May 13, 2009**

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs meeting was held via video-conference (VTC) hosted at seven different sites – Belgrade, Billings, Butte, Great Falls, Helena (Fort Harrison), Miles City and Missoula, all located in Montana National Guard armories. Chairman Don Kettner called the meeting to order at 2 p.m., May 13, 2009, at the Billings location with the following individuals present:

Don Kettner, Chairman	Joe Foster, Administrator
Bob Pavlovich, Vice-Chairman	Byron Erickson, Member
Mary Creech, Member	Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Keith Heavyrunner, Member	Tom Huddleston, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member	Harry LaFriniere, Member
Harvey Rattey, Member	Larry Anderson, Rep. Rehberg
Jennifer Perez Cole, Member	Teresa Bell, Member
Matthew McCombs, Senator Tester	June Rychalski, Admin. Assistant
Senator Joe Tropila, Member	Jim Anacker, Senator Baucus

Visitors attending were Josh Clement, American Legion – Belgrade, George Morales – Bozeman, Katie Kazmier – Miles City, and Beverly Stewart, Montana State President – Vietnam Veterans of America.

Chairman Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve last meeting's Minutes was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Beginning with the division's operational update, Joe Foster provided the members the Montana Veterans Affairs Division's financial report. The handout shows that as of March 1, 2009, the division's veteran service officers' work effort brought in \$93,272,648 in federal VA benefits for veterans and their family members. Another handout showed that as of March 1, 2009, 3241 claim products were generated and submitted to the federal VA.

The next handout showed the "Veteran" license plates sales. As of April 1, 2009, 4555 Veteran plates were purchased – which are 89 fewer plates than last year at this time.

The state veterans cemetery program report began with the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison. Irrigation system installation and grass hydroturfing for the new Section E will begin once the weather permits. Interments into this newly developed area will not begin until the summer of 2010. As of April 1, 2009, there have been 2421 total interments in the cemetery, with 127 so far this fiscal year.

Due to the vandalism experienced at the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Miles City, the cemetery has been closed after duty hours and on weekends. We are still working with the Custer County Sheriff's Office to secure services for opening/closing during non-duty hours/days. As of April 1, 2009, there have been 247 total interments in the cemetery, with 21 so far this fiscal year.

The Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery has been very active since it began operations in October 2008. It now has 110 interments. We have hired a second temporary employee who is authorized until July 1, 2009.

The Montana State Veterans Cemetery and the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery recently received an inspection by National Cemetery Administration officials. While we will have the official reports available for the next board meeting, the on-site debriefings were extremely positive. The Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery will receive the same type inspection in June.

The results of the 2009 Legislative session for our agency were very positive. House Bill 2 has not yet been signed by Governor Schweitzer; but when it is, we will be authorized five additional full-time positions – three of which will be veterans service officers with prospective placement in Billings, Great Falls and Missoula; and the other two will be cemetery personnel for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery. We thank board member, Senator Joe Tropila for his hand in making this happen. The legislature voted a 2% across-the-board general fund reduction for all agencies for the next two years. This amount will have to be made up in our division by staggering our new veterans service officer hires. We must also deal with a 3% increase to the “vacancy savings” reduction to our personnel budget which results in a 7% vacancy savings level. This means that the annual budget authorized for our personnel cost is automatically reduced 7%, which is a very significant amount. The “vacancy savings” is supposed to be made up by keeping vacant positions open for longer periods of time. However, for a small agency like ours – with small turnover and a very large workload each service office which demands immediate fill, we are never able to save the amount targeted – which means that we must reduce expenditures in other areas.

Because the budget will be very tight for the next two fiscal years resultant of the across-the-board budget reduction and increase to the vacancy savings percentage, we do not have the budget typically available for the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) van purchase program, Honor Guard uniform assistance, and other veterans service requests we annually receive from the state’s veterans service organizations. At the end of the 2010 fiscal year, we will determine if there is any money available to grant requests. The one exception to this is that we do plan to support the homeless veteran stand downs in Libby, Hamilton and Billings with the \$1000 grants typically provide.

Following is legislation which passed and impacts the division:

House Bill 306 authorized Veteran license plates for motorcycles. Motorcycles are permanently registered vehicles. The division does not expect to receive any additional revenue due to the sale of these plates.

House Bill 373 authorizes the Gold Star Family license plate. Family members qualify for the plate purchase in accordance with the federal criteria that created the Gold Star Lapel Button. This division is responsible for the cost to create the plate, and a committee will be formed to recommend its design. Board members are invited to participate in this project; however, there will be no funds available for travel. After the design is completed, the board will review it. The division does not expect to receive any additional revenue due to the sale of these plates.

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House Bill 213, which authorizes a Southwest Montana Veterans Home, passed and has been signed by Governor Schweitzer. The Department of Public Health and Human Services is the lead agency for this project and will oversee the selection committee and process detailed in the legislation. The committee will consist of one honorably-discharged veteran representing each of the six counties eligible as a site location, plus a representative from the Departments of Administration, Public Health and Human Services, and Military Affairs. The committee will determine and forward the preferred site recommendation to the Governor – the process will take about a year. A construction “savings account” has been established based upon a temporary reallocation of cigarette tax monies. Ultimately, a federal VA grant will be requested by the Department of Public Health and Human Services which is to provide 65% of the construction cost – Montana is responsible for 35% of the construction cost.

Don Kettner discussed an initiative in Glendive to attain a van to transport veterans within a 100 mile radius to the Eastern Montana Veterans Home and VA clinic. Matthew McCombs reported that Senator Tester introduced Senate Bill 658, the Rural Veteran Health Improvement Act of 2009, which would assist organizations attain a \$50,000 transportation grant. Chairman Kettner asked Joe Foster how much grant money the DAV had received from the Montana Veterans Affairs Division to purchase vans. Mr. Foster responded that since 2004, the DAV had received \$261,000 – with the latest grant being for \$25,000 at the beginning of fiscal year 2009.

Senator Tester’s bill also directs the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the federal VA to do a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure that veteran health records can be interchangeable between the VA and IHS, and authorizes surplus medical equipment to go from the VA to IHS. It also directs the VA to conduct a feasibility study about the potential of joint use of facilities by VA and IHS on reservations. The bill would also raise travel reimbursement to 41½ cents per mile, and gives the VA Secretary the authority to initiate a requirement that the per-mile payment does not exceed the cost of public transportation, e.g., travel by bus. Another section deals with enhancing rural veteran mental health care. It is hoped that the bill will pass this year.

Board member Tom Huddleston’s paper and DVD regarding post-traumatic stress disorder will be provided board members, and the issue will be discussed during the next scheduled board meeting.

George Morales raised a question of a veterans service officer being assigned to the Hamilton area. Joe Foster replied this area is serviced in an outreach capacity by the veterans service office located in Missoula. Byron Erickson commented on the good job these service officers have done – specifically mentioning the Missoula and Belgrade service offices.

Joe Foster asked Matthew McCombs if there was any legislation to increase the cemetery plot allowance. Matthew stated that the plot allowance is recognized as needing increased, and he will bring that issue up to Senator Tester.

Teresa Bell was asked about the VA’s involvement in supplying vans for veterans transportation. She replied that the DAV purchases the vans and then donates them to the

VA, which is then responsible for the ongoing fuel and maintenance expenses. The VA does not purchase the vans.

She also reported that the VA clinics in Great Falls, Missoula and Kalispell have been expanded. They now have room to add Ophthalmology and Orthopedic consultations. The VA is also planning on stationing two new examiner positions in Great Falls.

On June 25, the VA will host a public hearing regarding utilization of space at Fort Harrison for homeless person transitional housing. Teresa will send out more information on this event in the next few weeks. She also stated that the American Legion's National Commander will be visiting Fort Harrison in early June.

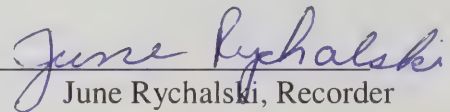
Joe Foster asked the Board Members for their impression of holding future board meetings via VTC. After discussion it was recommended that the board continue holding one meeting per year via VTC, and the other two meetings being "in person."

After discussion, it was determined that the next board meeting will be held in Glendive on September 24, 2009 at 2 pm in the Eastern Montana Veterans Home.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.



Don Kettner, Chairman



June Rychalski, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
- MEETING MINUTES -
 September 30, 2009

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs meeting was held in Glendive at the Eastern Montana State Veterans Home on Sept. 24, 2009. Chairman Don Kettner called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. The following individuals were present:

Don Kettner, Chairman
 Bob Pavlovich, Vice-Chairman
 Mary Creech, Member
 Keith Heavyrunner, Member
 Byron Erickson, Member
 Tom Huddleston, Member
 Harry LaFriniere, Member
 Kelly Williams, Member
 Senator Joe Tropila, Member

Joe Foster, Administrator
 Sylvia Beals, Member
 Larry Anderson, Rep. Rehberg
 Bruce Knutson, Sen. Tester
 Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst

Chairman Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve last meeting's Minutes was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Beginning with the division's operational update, Joe Foster provided the members the Montana Veterans Affairs Division's financial report. The handout shows that as of June 30, 2009, the division's veteran service officers' work effort brought in \$126,362,250 in federal VA benefits for veterans and their family members. This Fiscal Year 2009 total is approximately \$10 million more than Fiscal Year 2008's total. Another handout showed that as of June 30, 2009, 4448 claim products were generated and forwarded to the federal VA for action.

The division is in the process of hiring the 2009 legislatively authorized three additional veterans service officers. These three positions, along with the two full-time positions recently hired to operate the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery, brings the division's full-time staff to 30 – three of whom are in the administrative office, five in the veterans cemetery program, and the remaining 22 in the veterans services program.

Two veterans service officer position located in Wolf Point and Havre – which were authorized during the 2007 Legislative Session – were ultimately approved with a legislatively-mandated claims production requirement. Mr. Foster reported that Wolf Point's Fiscal Year 2009 goal was 44 claim products, and the end-of-year production was 55 claim products. Havre's Fiscal Year 2009 goal was 53 claim products, and the end-of-year production was 86 claim products. Sheena Wilson, Governor Schweitzer's Deputy Chief of Staff, sent Mr. Foster and the division staff an email congratulating everyone on the accomplishment. The email was provided board members.

The Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison has a total burial count of 2479, as of the end of Fiscal Year 2009. We are still waiting on our \$1.1 million expansion and refurbishing project. Our going forward with the project is based upon whether or not the project is identified by the VA's State Cemetery Grant Program as a Priority 1 project.

The Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery near Miles City has a total burial count of 265, as of the end of Fiscal Year 2009. We now have a functioning contract with the Custer County Sheriff's Department to ensure public access during non-duty hours/days. This contract was required due to vandalism at the cemetery.

The Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula has a total burial count of 141, as of the end of Fiscal Year 2009. The cemetery has only been open for eight months. Many of these burials were veteran cremated remains which families had been holding, awaiting cemetery operations. The cemetery's two full-time personnel were hired effective July 1, 2009.

The cemetery inspections conducted by National Cemetery Administration officials were extremely positive. All three cemeteries were recognized as compliant with National Shrine Standards, and outstanding in both appearance and operations. Mr. Foster nominated the veterans cemetery program staff for the 2009 Governor's Award for Excellence; and the nomination was supported both by the Dept. of Military Affairs and Governor Schweitzer. The cemetery program personnel recognized in the formal ceremony honoring the State of Montana's 2009 outstanding employees are Wayne Carlson, Nick Newlon, June Rychalski, Kurt Holmlund, Curt Aasved and Justin Murray.

Gary Gaub, Administrator of the Eastern Montana State Veterans Home in Glendive, provided a brief on the home's operations. The 80-bed facility is almost full with 78 residents.

Board member Bob Pavlovich gave a report on the Southwest Montana State Veterans Home's site-selection study committee, which recently held its first meeting. The deadline for the site selection recommendation to Governor Schweitzer is April 10, 2010.

Joe Foster reported that the new Billings Community-Based Out-Patient Clinic will officially open at the end of September, and that two new Vet Centers have been approved for Great Falls and Kalispell. Currently, there are Vet Centers only in Billings and Missoula. The VA hosted a public hearing on Sept. 9, 2009 to discuss the possibilities of leasing 2 acres for homeless transitional housing at the Ft. Harrison VA Medical Center complex. Mr. Foster reported that Joe Underkofler, Director for the VA-Montana Health Care System, will be retiring; and that Ms. Susan Fuehrer has been appointed as the Acting Director for the next 90 days. Her current position is the Assistant Director of the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center in Cleveland.

Board member Tom Huddleston's paper and DVD regarding his personal post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was previously provided to the Board members. The disability and VA program regarding PTSD was briefly discussed. Mr. Huddleston also briefed the Board on a "Big Read" and Holter Museum function in Helena which features the book "The Things They Carried." The activities surrounding this book and other veteran interactive events will last approximately five weeks in Helena.

The Veterans Affairs Division is currently undergoing a reorganization of its operational structure. Joe Foster stated that the fundamental rationale behind this is to strengthen the division's veterans services program's operational and supervisory processes. With the addition of the three new veterans service officers to be hired in Billings, Great Falls and

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Missoula, this authorized upward mobility for Dorothy Jarosz (Billings), Dave Capps (Great Falls), and Melinda Buxton (Missoula). Mr. Len Leibinger (Missoula) was selected as the new Operations/Regional Veteran Service Officer, and Kelly Ackerman (Belgrade) was selected as the new Regional Veteran Service Officer for Region 1.

Joe Foster informed the board that specific employees of the division have petitioned to form a union bargaining unit. A hearing was held on Sept. 22 to decide if the Veterans Service Officer IIs and the Budget Analyst are eligible. The Department of Military Affairs and Mr. Foster have taken the position that the VSO IIs and the Budget Analyst are supervisors, and are therefore not eligible to join a union. The hearing officer's decision is expected in late October.

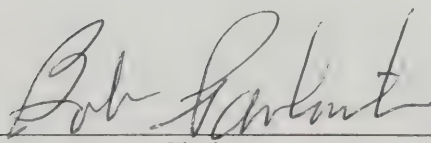
Joe Foster briefed the board regarding the newly authorized "Gold Star Family" license plate. A design committee will meet on Tuesday, Sept. 29; and is comprised of State Representative Franke Wilmer, Mr. Foster, and representatives of the state's major veterans service organizations. The criteria by which a family member can purchase this license plate are based upon the Public Law which created the "Gold Star Lapel Pin." The license plate is expected to be available for purchase in early January 2010.

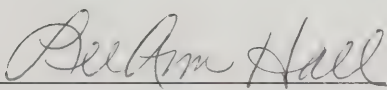
Mr. Foster then reported the briefing he provided attorneys/law students/interested citizenry at the request the University of Montana Law School regarding veterans services and issues. The hour-long presentation led to the fundamental message that veterans are best served if they utilize a trained, certified, accredited and experienced veterans service officer to provide the veteran claim product services; rather than friends, attorneys, independent agents, or the veteran - him/herself. Mr. Huddleston stated that attorneys should be welcome regarding veteran lawsuits. Mr. Foster agreed, stating that that particular issue is completely different than the issue of who should provide a veteran claim product services.

The new Post-9/11 GI Bill process is experiencing a huge backlog, which is having an enormous negative impact on veteran students and universities, alike. Board member Bruce Knutson stated that Montana University System has adopted policy to ensure that veterans waiting for the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill payments are not dismissed from school due to these financial circumstances that are beyond the students' control. Per board request, Joe Foster will draft a letter for the chairman's signature thanking Dr. Sheila Stearns, Commissioner of Higher Education, for her leadership and support regarding this issue.

After discussion, it was determined that the next board meeting will be held in Great Falls on February 11, 2010 at 2 p.m.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.


Don Kettner, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

February 11, 2010

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Vice-Chairman Bob Pavlovich at 2 p.m., February 11, 2010 at the Crystal Inn in Great Falls. The following following individuals were present:

Bob Pavlovich, Vice-Chairman
Senator Joe Tropila, Member
James English, Member
Mary Creech, Member
Sylvia Beals, Member
Harry LaFriniere, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Keith Heavyrunner, Member
Teresa Bell, Member

Brig. Gen. John Walsh, Member
Byron Erickson, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Admin. Specialist
Kelly Williams, Member
Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester
Jennifer Perez Cole, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Larry Anderson, Rep. Rehberg
Lindsay Bell, Senator Baucus

Vice-Chairman Bob Pavlovich opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve last meeting's Minutes was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

The new members of the Board introduced were: Lindsay Bell, Senator Baucus, Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester, and James English, Helena - who is replacing Tom Huddleston for the remainder of his term.

For the division's operational update, Joe Foster provided the members the Montana Veterans Affairs Division's financial report. The handout shows that as of January 1, 2010, the division's veteran service officers' work effort brought in \$83,669,625 federal VA dollars for veterans and family members. This is broken down by service office areas of responsibility. Also, to date, there have been 2630 claim products generated and submitted to the VA Regional Office at Fort Harrison by division veterans service officers. Of that quantity, 1608 were disability compensation claims.

The division has now hired the 2009 legislatively authorized three additional veterans service officers. These three new positions were placed in our Great Falls, Billings and Missoula veterans service offices. Along with the two full-time positions recently hired to operate the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula, the division's full-time staff now totals 30 - three of whom are in the administrative office, five in the veterans cemetery program, and the remaining 22 in the veterans services program.

Joe Foster began the state veterans cemetery report with the Eastern Montana State Veterans cemetery in Miles City. With the contracted security now in place, the previously persistent vandalism has now ended.

We have received notification from the VA's Veterans Cemetery Program regarding our expansion project for the Montana State Veterans Cemetery located at Ft. Harrison – it is currently considered a Priority Group 3. This means that we do not anticipate any federal grants to expand the cemetery. However, due to the expansion we already invested in, there will be no shortfall to services to our veterans or veteran family members eligible for burial.

Board member Charlie Crookshanks provided an update to the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula, and reported that there are now approximately 240 burials. The one area of concern is that the columbarium is filling up much faster than anticipated.

The "Discussion Topics" began with Vice Chairman Pavlovich providing the Board an update on the Southwest Montana Veterans Home, which was authorized during the 2009 Legislative Session. In accordance with the requirements of the Request for Proposals for Site Selection for a Southwestern Montana Veterans Home, there are five formal proposals submitted from Jefferson, Beaverhead, Powell, Deer Lodge and Silver Bow counties. The specific time lines are:

- ◆ Written Questions Deadline: January 5, 2010
- ◆ Proposals Due: February 5, 2010, 2 p.m.
- ◆ Evaluate Proposals and Site Community Meetings: February 5–28, 2010
- ◆ Final Selection Process: March 2010
- ◆ Committee Recommendation of Site: Due to Governor April 1, 2010

Joe Foster recognized board member Byron Erickson for his leadership in establishing veteran provider organizations in various Montana communities. The original one was created in Bozeman – where Mr. Erickson worked at the time, and now additional groups exist in Helena and Missoula. Other communities have expressed interest in this type group and expansion is anticipated. The division's veterans service officers participate in these community group meetings, which typically occur monthly. They provide an excellent forum for exchange of agency services information and contacts.

Joe Foster informed the Board that the vote has been held where certain division positions had the opportunity to vote to form a collective bargaining unit, or not. The vote's result was that zero employees voted to form the unit. The process regarding this action is now complete.

The Gold Star Family vehicle license plate was discussed and the design provided to Board members and guests. The prison license plate shop is completing the process to produce the plate, and the plate is expected to be available in early March.

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Joe then addressed the issue of Board members whose appointment will end effective August 1, 2010. He provided the affected members information sheets providing contact and process information if any intend to reapply for appointment. Appointments are for four-year terms.

There will be a ground breaking ceremony for the new 24-bed inpatient mental health facility to be located at the Fort Harrison VA complex. Senator Jon Tester is the featured speaker, and it is scheduled for February 16, 2010 at noon. This will also provide the public an opportunity to meet the new Director for VA-Montana Health Care System, Ms. Robin L. Korogi.

Board member Teresa Bell announced the following:

- ◆ Physical therapy was added to the Missoula CBOC and its Ophthalmology clinic opened in 2009.
- ◆ Construction of a 7200 square foot expansion of the Fort Harrison laboratory will complete phase one in mid-March.
- ◆ A 4500 square foot expansion for physical therapy, including a new elevator, is scheduled to be complete in April 2010 at the VA medical center at Fort Harrison.
- ◆ The VA-Montana Health Care System now offers female veterans comprehensive health care in all of its 13 primary care clinics.
- ◆ Primary Care Telehealth Outreach Clinics in Hamilton and Plentywood will open in Fiscal Year 2010.
- ◆ Two new Vet Centers will be opened in Great Falls and Kalispell.

Joe Foster talked about the "Tribal Relations Handbook" and a "Guide to Build Cultural Awareness" handouts provided the Board members. He attended a one-day training seminar offered by the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, and Board member Jennifer Perez Cole was able to attain the handouts for all the division's staff members; as well as, the Board members.

The remodeling/expansion of the Montana Military Museum out at Fort Harrison should be complete in the summer 2010. Brig. Gen. Walsh provided an update as to its progress. The construction funding was provided during the 2009 Legislative Session.

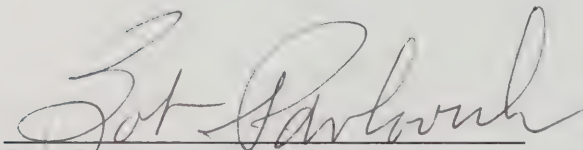
During the public comment portion of the meeting, Mr. Charles Paske addressed the Board regarding his company's interest in providing a new technology which may significantly enhance the VA's diagnosis of Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder conditions.

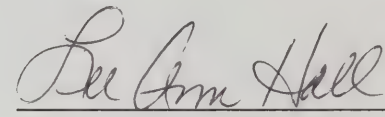
Board member Erickson stated his frustration with a County Treasurer not accepting a DD Form 214 as proof (that he is a veteran) for attaining a "Veteran" license plate. After discussion, Joe Foster stated that he would look into the issue.

Vice-Chairman Pavlovich discussed the "Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Care Improvement Act of 2010" – a bill Senators Baucus and Tester are planning on introducing. The bill would require the federal VA to place either a Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center or Polytrauma Network Site in the "northern Rockies or the Dakotas." The bill would also specify study of the Fort Harrison VA Center as the potential location. After discussion, the Board directed Joe Foster to draft a letter – to be signed by Board Chairman Don Kettner – which would ultimately be sent to Montana's Congressional Delegation stating the Board's support for this type facility.

Following discussion, the next board meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2009 at 2 p.m. The Board meeting will be conducted via video-teleconference (VTC) in selected National Guard armories throughout the state. Based upon the lessons learned from the last VTC, it is anticipated that only the VTC centers in Billings, Helena, Great Falls and Missoula will be utilized.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4 p.m.


Bob Pavlovich, Vice-Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES - May 13, 2010

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Don Kettner at 2 p.m., May 13, 2010. This Board meeting was a video teleconference with the following individuals present in four locations – Billings, Great Falls, Helena and Missoula:

Don Kettner, Chairman
Sylvia Beals, Member
Byron Erickson, Member
Keith Heavyrunner, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member

Lloyd Jackson, Member
Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester
Lindsay Bell, Senator Baucus
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Administrative Spec.

Chairman Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve last meeting's Minutes was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

As determined through roll call, the board meeting was designated "informational" since only five voting board members were present – six voting members are necessary to have a quorum.

For the division's operational update, Joe Foster briefed the veterans services financial report. The handout shows that as of May 1, 2010, the division's veteran service officers' work effort brought in \$122,181,174 federal VA dollars for veterans and family members. Also, to date, there have been 3797 claim products generated and submitted to the VA Regional Office at Fort Harrison by division veterans service officers. Of that quantity, 2438 were disability compensation claims.

Resultant of discussions from the last Board meeting, Joe prepared two letters. One was sent to Montana's Congressional Delegations (signed by Chairman Kettner) regarding the board's support for the "Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Care Improvement Act of 2010." The other letter was to the state's County Treasurers which provided guidance and points of contact regarding utilizing the DD Form 214 as proof of military service when a person applies for a "Veteran" license plate.

Regarding the state veterans cemeteries, there were no significant developments or issues that were briefed. Memorial Day ceremonies will be conducted at each cemetery; the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison's will be held at noon, May 30, and the ceremonies at both the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery (Miles City) and Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery (Missoula) will be held at noon, May 31.

Joe Foster briefed the mandated 5% cut to the division's Fiscal Year 2011 budget. To accomplish this, the Wolf Point veterans service office will be closed effective June 30, 2010. This will save the division approximately \$17,000, and comply with Governor Schweitzer's initiative to reduce the quantity of leased state office space and leased state vehicles. The Wolf Point veterans service office's expenses in these two categories are the highest of any of the division's leased office space (cost per square foot) and leased vehicles. The full-time position in Wolf Point will be moved to the Miles City veterans service office and filled at a half-time employment basis.

Joe then briefed the expected division budget reduction of 9%, which is expected for the upcoming biennium – Fiscal Years 2012-13, which includes a mandatory 4% reduction for personnel services. The plan for this 9% reduction is drafted and being submitted to the Department of Military Affairs. A full briefing of the approved plan will be conducted during the next Board meeting.

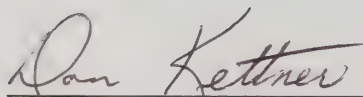
The Governor's office is reducing the quantity of Advisory Councils that support State agencies; of which, we have two. The Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery Advisory Council will expire August 31, 2010, and the Montana State Veterans Cemetery Advisory Council will expire August 31, 2011. Joe sent all council members and the veterans service organizations a letter explaining the action, and encouraged the councils to continue meeting with cemetery leadership; albeit in an informal status.


The Gold Star Family license plate design review process is complete and a ceremony introducing the plate will be held May 27 at 11 a.m. in the Capitol Rotunda. We have already received five requests for the plate, all qualify.

Joe met with Cherry Creek Radio to discuss recording a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) regarding the division's veterans services. The request was well received and currently the PSA is airing in Helena. The Montana National Guard's public affairs office is dubbing 60 compact discs of the PSA for the division. Upon receipt, they will be mailed to 50 radio station business managers who operate in 26 different Montana cities, airing 113 stations.

Discussion took place regarding the poor quality teleconference performance in the Great Falls and Missoula locations. This problem must be remedied or the teleconference format will be discontinued.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m. The next board meeting is scheduled for July 22, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. in Bozeman.


Don Kettner, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

July 22, 2010

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Don Kettner at 1 p.m., July 22, 2010 at the National Guard Readiness Center near Belgrade. Board members and Montana Veterans Affairs Division staff in attendance were:

Don Kettner, Chairman
Sylvia Beals, Member
Byron Erickson, Member
Keith Heavrunner, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Bob Pavlovich, Member
Joe Tropila, Member
Lesia Evers, Member
Jim English, Member

Mary Creech, Member
Larry Anderson, Rep. Rehberg
Lindsay Bell, Senator Baucus
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lee Ann Hall, Administrative Spec.
Teresa Bell, Member
Janine Mahn, Veteran Service Officer
Kelly Ackerman, Veteran Service Officer

Chairman Kettner opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve last meeting's Minutes was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

For the division's operational update, Joe Foster first briefed the veterans services financial report. The handout shows that as of June 30, 2010, the division's veteran service officers' work effort brought in \$147,175,835 federal VA disbursements for veterans and family members. Also, to date, there have been 4635 claim products generated and submitted to the VA Regional Office at Fort Harrison by division veterans service officers. Of that quantity, 3052 were disability compensation claims - which is a 22% increase over last year. Both the financial and claims production reports represent the ending totals for Fiscal Year 2010.

Joe Foster discussed the 30-second public service announcement (PSA) informing the public of the division's available services. This PSA was sent out to 50 radio station managers throughout the state who operate approximately 120 radio stations. The PSA has seemingly been well received and is known to be currently airing in Helena, Bozeman, Kalispell and Great Falls. There was and is no charge for this advertisement and service.

The division's Biennial Report has been provided the Governor's Office and Legislative Services, making it available to incoming legislators and the general public. Joe Foster provided an overview of the report to the board.

Joe Foster addressed the Wolf Point veterans service office closure, which was effective June 30, 2010 and resultant of mandated budget reductions. The closure will save the division approximately \$17,000 and comply with Governor Schweitzer's initiative to reduce the quantity of leased state office space and leased state vehicles. The full-time position in Wolf Point has been transferred to the Miles City veterans service office and is planned to be filled at a half-time employment level. Of significant consideration in determining whether or not to close the Wolf Point service office was any negative impacts on veterans services in the northeastern area of the state. Detailed analysis of past and present Wolf Point and Miles City service offices' veterans services claim production, and comparisons with the Havre veterans service office—which has similar veteran demographics—revealed that closure of the Wolf Point office is not only cost effective, but also will undoubtedly result in improved veterans services to the area. This will be monitored very closely by the administrator and the veterans services program's supervisory leadership.

The only update for the cemetery program is that we will be requesting a federal grant of \$800,000 to construct new columbaria for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula. The existing columbarium is filling up much faster than projected. There are no other construction plans for the other two state veterans cemeteries.

The Gold Star Family vehicle license plate program is up and running. As of today, we have had 14 requests for the plate. These requests are processed solely by the administrator.

After learning about a potentially fraudulent scheme involving senior-aged veterans in Billings and Kalispell, Joe Foster contacted the Department of Justice with the findings. Reportedly, an insurance or financial products company representative will go into a senior citizens facility and market financial products to veterans – the “hook” being “qualifying” clients for VA pension and aid/attendance financial benefits. The danger to the veterans is that they must legally transfer their financial assets out of their ownership – essentially becoming extremely poor – to prospectively qualify for VA pension. VA pension is a minimal monthly benefit and requires very specific military experience and low income/asset levels. Aid and attendance, itself, is extremely difficult to qualify for; yet, the representatives are marketing it like it is relatively easy to attain. Significantly, however, before a person would apply for the benefit, he/she would have already transferred all assets. The Attorney General's Office, the Insurance and Securities Commissioner's Office, the Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Montana Veterans Affairs Division have joined forces to expose what is essentially considered a “scam.” Formal investigations of specific financial services/insurance companies and participating senior-citizen facilities have begun. It is believed that this issue has been caught pretty early in Montana.


Board member Pavlovich talked about the Southwest Montana Veterans Home's site selection committee. He asked for boardmember support in testifying before the Legislature to attain appropriated state funds to construct the facility in Butte. Joe advised the Board that the Board is an Executive Branch entity; and as such, should not testify for the veterans home since it is not in Governor Schweitzer's executive budget. However, board members can testify and work to solicit supporting testimony from veterans service organizations and others as private citizens.


Keith Heavyrunner talked about his trip to Washington, D.C. to perform at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. His Warrior Society represented the Blackfeet Nation and State of Montana. Keith had a video that will be viewed at the next Board meeting.

Teresa Bell announced that this will be her last Board meeting; Robin Korogi will represent the federal VA in the future. Teresa handed out a VA Montana Health Care System Fact Sheet and briefed the Board on the new Community Based Outreach Clinics, new VA construction projects, Veteran Homeless program, Rural Access initiatives—to include the new Telehealth Outreach clinics in Plentywood and Hamilton, and two newly proposed Vet Centers in Kalispell and Great Falls.

Board officer elections were held as Chairman Kettner's term is up. Vice-Chairman Bob Pavlovich was elected as the new Chairman; and Sylvia Beals was elected as the new Vice-Chairman.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m. The next Board meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. in Helena.


Don Kettner, Chairman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

- MEETING MINUTES -

November 18, 2010

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Bob Pavlovich at 1 p.m., November 18, 2010 at the Regional Training Institute in Helena (Fort Harrison) with the following individuals present:

Bob Pavlovich, Chair	Harry LaFriniere, Member
Sylvia Beals, Vice-Chair	Bernard Jacobs, Member
Byron Erickson, Member	Lindsay Bell, Senator Baucus
Mary Creech, Member	Lloyd Jackson, Member
Charlie Crookshanks, Member	Bruce Knudson, Senator Tester
Jim Heffernan, Member	Maren Olsen, Representative Rehberg
Joe Tropila, Member	Joe Foster, Administrator
Lesia Evers, Member	Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst
Jim English, Member	

Chairman Pavlovich opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, a motion was made to approve and was seconded. The motion carried.

For the division's operational update, Joe Foster first briefed the veterans services financial impact report. The handout shows that as of October 31, 2010, the division's veteran service officers' work effort brought in \$43,833,078 federal VA disbursements for veterans and family members. Also, to date, there have been 1456 claim products generated and submitted to the VA Regional Office at Fort Harrison by division veterans service officers. Of that quantity, 1034 were disability compensation claims.

We have three Veteran Service Officers retiring December 31, 2010. Dorothy Jarosz, Sherry Stewart and Jane Gerald gave their notice last month. A stated concern of the employees is the reported proposed changes in the State Pension System. Dorothy works in the Billings veterans service office; both Sherry and Jane work in the Kalispell office – all are very good veterans service officers and will be significant losses to the division.

Joe announced that he has filled the Regional Veteran Service Officer position in Great Falls vacated by Valerie Martin, who retired Sept. 30, 2010. The new hire is Pat Kelly who has recently retired after 35 years with the federal VA, the last 18 of which was managing Veteran Service Centers. Pat's extensive management and veteran benefits claim experience will be invaluable to the division. His employment will begin January 18, 2011. Also, Michael (Andy) Haegle was hired in September to fill the Veterans Service Officer I position located in the division's Fort Harrison service office.

The division's Senior Veterans Service Officer, Lori Perkio, was selected to attend the National Veterans Law Internship Program at the American Legion Appeals and Special Claims Unit in Washington, D.C. This is a month-long program and is being funded by the American Legion. Her selection to this internship is unprecedented to the division, and reflects Lori's recognized superior level of competence and professionalism at both state and national levels. She will return to work at her Fort Harrison service office on Dec. 6.

Andrea Montee, Veterans Service Officer I in our Missoula office will be recognized during the Bobcat-Grizzly football game in Missoula. Andrea will be recognized for her outstanding military/veterans service as the "Volunteer of the Game." This recognition is sponsored by the Governor's Office.

So far this fiscal year, we have buried 129 veterans/spouses at the three veteran cemeteries. Broken down: 73 at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison, 38 at the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula, and 18 at the Eastern Montana State Veteran's Cemetery near Miles City.

There are no cemetery construction projects to report on at this time. Our request a federal grant to construct the interment addition at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery received a Priority Group 4 rating – which is very low – by the federal VA, and that project is on hold for the foreseeable future. We have submitted a grant proposal for building additional columbaria at the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula, but there is no word on how that request has fared, to date.

Joe Foster then discussed two Department of Veterans Affairs news items and the status of proposed legislation (national level) which the Board supported with letters to the Congressional delegation:

The Department of Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Service have signed a Memorandum of Understanding which is intended to benefit American Indian and Alaska Native veteran health services.

The VA-Montana Fort Harrison medical center has received significantly higher than average favorable customer satisfaction ratings by its consumers. The handout provided the VA-Montana and VISN 19 rating graphs.

The Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Care Improvement Act of 2010 (Senate Bill 3035) requests a funded study to determine a recommended location for this type treatment facility in the Dakotas or Eastern Montana. If approved and ultimately constructed, this treatment center would be immensely beneficial to Montana's veteran population suffering from traumatic brain injury.

Joe Foster then discussed the AARP article (handout) which addressed Montana's efforts to warn veteran senior citizens about the financial product scam issue facing many senior Montana veterans residing in retirement/nursing/

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assisted living homes. The article was distributed nationwide via the AARP's internet news service. This scam issue was covered in depth during the July 2010 Board meeting.

Available for review were handouts from the American Institute of Philanthropy and Charitywatch.org. This nonprofit charity watchdog and information resource evaluates and "grades" prominent veterans and military service/support organizations as to whether or not they do a good job in ensuring the donation goes to the marketed cause.

Board member Joe Tropila will be leaving the Legislature due to term limits, but will be remaining on the Board until a replacement is appointed. Provided to the Board was a copy of an article from "The Interim" (which is produced by the State of Montana Legislative Services Division), its October issue recognized Senator Tropila's outstanding service for Montana veterans.

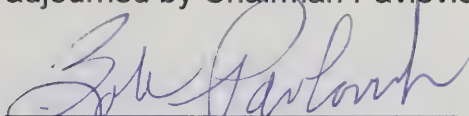

Chairman Pavlovich briefed the Board on the proposed Southwest Montana State Veterans Home. He solicited Board member support – as individuals – to testify in support of attaining state funds to build the veterans home during the upcoming Legislative Session. Joe Foster reminded Board members that as members of an Executive Branch Board, they can only – as a Board member – testify in accordance with the Governor's budget or policy stances.

Board member Byron Erickson solicited Board member input regarding whether or not grant monies provided to veteran stand downs are being spent on homeless veterans – as opposed to non-veterans and/or veterans who are not homeless. Discussion revealed that stand downs significantly vary in their intent and/or operational control as to whether or not grant monies provided specifically for homeless veterans are utilized solely for homeless veterans. Byron stated that the Department of Labor, which provides the most prominent and generous homeless veteran grants in the state, is studying this issue.

Board member Bruce Knudson briefed the Board on the Veterans Opportunity Workshop Senator Jon Tester hosted in Great Falls. Approximately 150 people attended to hear and ask questions of various panel presentations which focused on programs and services benefiting veterans. The workshop was considered a success, and more will be planned in the future.

Board member Charlie Crookshanks briefed the Board on the Veterans Day ceremony in Missoula which commemorated the Korean War's 60th anniversary.

The next Board meeting was discussed, and it will be held May 19, 2011 at 1 p.m. via a teleconference format. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Pavlovich at 3 p.m.


Bob Pavlovich, Chairman
Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

- MEETING MINUTES -

March 10, 2011

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Bob Pavlovich at 2 p.m., March 10, 2011 at the National Guard Armory in Helena. Board members and Montana Veterans Affairs Division staff in attendance were:

Bob Pavlovich, Chairman
Sylvia Beals, Co-Chair
Byron Erickson, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Joe Tropila, Member
Les Evers, Member
Bernie Jacobs, Member

Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst
Joe Foster, Administrator
Lindsay Bell, Senator Baucus
Will Selph, Rep. Rehberg
Elizabeth Larson, VSO II
Andy Haegele, VSO I

Also in attendance were: Gary White, Bob Beals and David Driver – American Legion; Larry Longfellow – VFW; Michael Clouse – DAV; George Moralez and Delmar Davis – VVA; Joren Underdahl – Montana State Veterans Home; and Anna Whiting-Sorrell – Director of the Dept. of Public Health and Human Services.

This Board meeting was called as a result of legislative issues of major importance and impact to both the division and veterans served by the Montana State Veterans Home in Columbia Falls, and the need to provide time-critical information to both Board members and veterans service organization leadership. As such, this Board meeting supplants the originally scheduled meeting which was to take place May 19, 2011, via teleconference.

Chairman Pavlovich opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

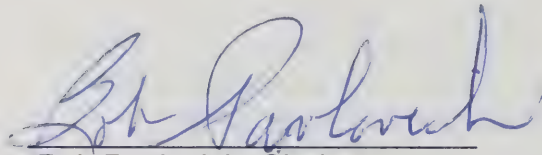
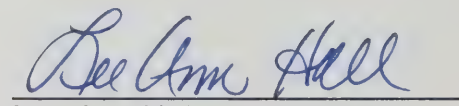
Joe Foster first briefed the Board that the Legislatively-mandated 5% reductions to our General Fund and Special Revenue budgets have been restored. Joe then stated that we have two priority Legislative issues to discuss. First is House Bill 375, which would reduce our special revenue budget by 10%, which would significantly impact both our veterans services and veterans cemetery programs. The resultant budget reduction would total \$145,275. With these cuts, we would have to prospectively discontinue our outreach program and incur staff reductions. Joe stated that he would be leaving the Board meeting early as he was notified yesterday that HB 375 is scheduled for Executive Action at 3:30 p.m.

He then provided an overview of the prospective privatization of the State of Montana's veterans home located at Columbia Falls. Upon completion, Mr. Underdahl – administrator of the Montana State Veterans Home – stated his concerns regarding degradation of services to the facility's clients if the current budget reduction of \$3.2 million is ultimately passed by the legislature.

Ms. Anna Whiting-Sorrell, director of the Department of Public Health and Human Services, then gave her presentation regarding the proposed \$3.2 million cut from the Montana State Veterans Home; including the process by which this initiative came about and the proposed options, which are based upon a study conducted by the Legislative Fiscal Division. Both Mr. Underdahl and Ms. Whiting-Sorrell answered numerous questions regarding the closure issue from both Board members and the attendees. Of particular significance was the mandated request for proposal (RFP) process, time frames, and anticipated problems. This RFP question and the accompanying issues were then addressed in regards to the Butte-located Southwest Montana State Veterans Home, which is in the process of being funded. Chairman Pavlovich was informed that the expectation is that an RFP for privatized service provision would be initiated, with prospective bidding expected from hospitals located in both Butte and Anaconda.

The next discussion issue was when the Board's next meeting would take place. Decided was that a meeting date and location would be determined once the Legislative Session was completed. At that time, a meeting would be scheduled to address the legislative outcomes, be they positive or negative.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.


Bob Pavlovich, Chairman
Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

July 19, 2011

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Bob Pavlovich at 2 p.m., July 19, 2011 at the Montana Veterans Home in Columbia Falls. Board members and Montana Veterans Affairs Division staff in attendance were:

Bob Pavlovich, Chairman
Sylvia Beals, Co-Chair
Byron Erickson, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Larry Jent, Member
Mary Creech, Member
Bernie Jacobs, Member

Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester
Evin Wilson, Rep. Rehberg
Keith Heavyrunner, Member
Kelly Ackerman, Senior VSO
Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst

Also in attendance were: Bob Beals, Curtis Bunton – American Legion; Mike Bennett, Ed Croucher – VFW; Dianna Bennett, Ladies Auxiliary, VFW, Stephen Combs, Joren Underdahl – Montana State Veterans Home.

Chairman Pavlovich opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Joe Foster first thanked Joren Underdahl and his staff for their great hospitality and for the tour of the nursing home. Joe then introduced Kelly Ackerman as the new Senior Veterans Service Officer.

For the operations report, Joe announced that the division had quite a big turnover this past year. Four employees retired, 3 employees left to take other job opportunities, 1 was fired and 4 others moved within the division. Nine new employees were hired last year and 8 are still with us. The positive side to all of this is that we have a new group of young service officers to compliment our senior service officers. The only problem with the turnover is that we don't have a completed yearend financial report. Three of the offices have not submitted their report so with that being said our financial impact for 2011 to date is \$142,126,497. Once all reports are in we expect the total to hit \$150M and the total claims production will go from 3519 to around 4000. We will have the final figures at the next Board meeting.

Wayne Carlson, Cemetery Program Manager is retiring with 20 years of state service. Tom Hall has been hired to replace Wayne. The only other vacant position is the VSO I in Great Falls. Interviews have been scheduled for July 25, 2011. Once the Great Falls position is hired we will be 100% staffed.

The State Veterans Cemeteries interment total for the fiscal year was 345 for the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Ft. Harrison, 195 for the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula and 45 for the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Miles City. The only construction plan in progress is the expansion of columbarium's for the veterans cemetery in Missoula. We are hoping construction will start in the Spring of 2012.

For the Legislative update, Joe explained that our division faced numerous budget challenges. The only one that made it through the session was the mandated 5% by the Governors budget which was the reason for closing our Wolf Point office. Joe then briefed the Board on the other veteran related legislative bills.

HB156. An act increasing the allowance to be paid by the county of residence for the interment and the shipping and raising of a headstone for a veteran. The interment fee went from \$250 to \$500 and the raising of a veteran headstone went from \$70 to \$100.

HB 255. Provide that every March 30 is Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

SB 326 Provide for a Veterans Home Loan Program with funds coming from the Permanent Coal Tax Trust Fund.

Board member Byron Erickson talked about the Tribal Nations DVOP Pilot Program whereas there would be a part-time employment specialist on all 7 reservations. He further went on to report that there are over 1 million veterans out of work in the US. The breakdown is as follows:

271,000	Vietnam Veterans
290,000	Cold War Era Veterans
174,000	Persian Gulf War Veterans
260,000	Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans

Overall, there are 14.1 million Americans out of work. That comes to an unemployment rate of 9.6, nationally.

Chairman Pavlovich gave the Board an update on the Montana State Veterans Home scheduled to be built in Butte. The \$8.5M budget passed. A&E is ready with the preliminary plans and is just waiting for the money to be released. Chairman Pavlovich said they may use the cigarette tax money for ground breaking.

Jaren Underdahl gave an update on the Columbia Falls Veterans Home. Jaren stated that the proposed legislative budget reduction of \$3.2 million didn't make it out of committee and the budget was restored. Co-Chair Sylvia Beals asked Jaren if he is getting his budget information together as this will surely come up again next legislature. It was mentioned that the Board of Veterans Affairs and all the veteran service organizations need to band together to keep the Veterans Home up and running with their current budget in tack.

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

July 19, 2011

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairman Bob Pavlovich at 2 p.m., July 19, 2011 at the Montana Veterans Home in Columbia Falls. Board members and Montana Veterans Affairs Division staff in attendance were:

Bob Pavlovich, Chairman
Sylvia Beals, Co-Chair
Byron Erickson, Member
Lloyd Jackson, Member
Larry Jent, Member
Mary Creech, Member
Bernie Jacobs, Member

Charlie Crookshanks, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester
Evin Wilson, Rep. Rehberg
Keith Heavyrunner, Member
Kelly Ackerman, Senior VSO
Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst

Also in attendance were: Bob Beals, Curtis Bunton – American Legion; Mike Bennett, Ed Croucher – VFW; Dianna Bennett, Ladies Auxiliary, VFW, Stephen Combs, Joren Underdahl – Montana State Veterans Home.

Chairman Pavlovich opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. He then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Joe Foster first thanked Joren Underdahl and his staff for their great hospitality and for the tour of the nursing home. Joe then introduced Kelly Ackerman as the new Senior Veterans Service Officer.

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Dis Regard this page (279) printing error. Lee Ann

Mr. Bennett and Mr. Croucher with the Veterans of Foreign Wars talked to the Board about the VFW Service Officers program losing their funding and they have asked the Board for help. Chairman Pavlovich mentioned tapping into the cigarette tax monies. A VFW license plate was also mentioned.

Board officer elections were held as Chairman Pavlovich's term is up. Vice-Chairman Silvia Beals was elected as the new Chairman; and Keith Heavyrunner was elected as the new Vice-Chairman.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. Next Board meeting is scheduled for September 29, 2011 at 2:00 in Great Falls.



Bob Pavlovich, Chairman



Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

- MEETING MINUTES -

October 27, 2011

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairwoman Sylvia Beals at 2 p.m., October 27, 2011 in Great Falls, Montana. Board members and Montana Veterans Affairs Division staff in attendance were:

Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman
Keith Heavyrunner, Vice-Chair
Bernie Jacobs, Member
Gary Sorensen, Member
State Sen. Larry Jent, Member
Bill Willing, Member
Joe Tropila, Member
Sarah Price, Member

Harry LaFriniere, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester
Travis Monroe, Senator Baucus
Evan Wilson, Representative Rehberg
Anita Old Bull Big Man, Member
David Boyd, Member
Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst

Montana Veterans Affairs Division personnel also in attendance were: Rich Gaskins, Dan Arnold and Kari Brunken of the Great Falls veterans service office.

Chairwoman Beals opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and thanked everyone for being present. She then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Chairwoman Beals stated that we have six new voting Board members present. They are: Gary Sorensen, Bill Willing, Joe Tropila, Sarah Price, Anita Old Bull Big Man and David Boyd. All introduced themselves and provided personal background information regarding their military and/or veteran experience.

For the operations report and for the benefit of the new Board members, Joe Foster explained one of the handouts; that being a map of Montana over-laid over a portion of the Eastern United States to show how big the Montana outreach area is for our veteran service officers. We have ten veteran service offices located throughout the state and they are responsible for outreach to at least 40 additional communities. The outreach schedule is evaluated often to insure proper coverage and service.

Joe then explained the veterans services financial and claims production reports. Both reports are captured on a monthly basis, and show the type claim services we produce and the financial impact of our veterans service officers' (VSO) work effort. Last fiscal year, our operating budget was approximately \$1.4 million. This handout shows that as of June 30, 2011, the division's VSO's work effort brought in \$155,311,221 federal dollars for veterans/family members. Of note, our division is responsible for 70%+ of the claim products submitted to the VA for processing. Also, as of June 30, 2011, 3897 claim products were generated and submitted to the VA Regional Office at Fort Harrison by division veterans service officers. Of that quantity, 2820 were disability compensation claims.

Staffing the division's ten offices are 21 veteran service officers; all are filled, with the most recent being our office in Miles City.

The State Veterans Cemetery Program is actively working for a federal VA grant to construct new columbaria at the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula. While the federal VA has – in writing – committed the grant, we are in the final process of attaining the State of Montana's authority to begin the bidding process.

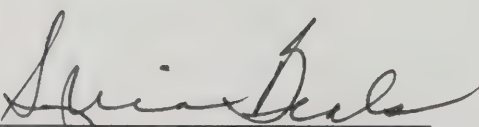
Joe reported serious staff personal security issues; we are currently looking into security options to enhance our service officers' safety and well-being.


Joe presented an informational article that he wrote concerning the deceitful, financially destructive, and very aggressive effort being marketed in many Montana retirement and assisted-living homes which promise elderly veteran clients VA pension and aid/attendance benefits. Anna Whiting-Sorrell and Bernie Jacobs are working on a poster and Public Service Announcements to get the word out. The state's Department of Public Health and Human Services has been extremely active with the division in combating this deplorable practice.

The next handout detailed the "Montana Veterans' Home Loan Mortgage Program." This program is designed to serve veterans or unmarried spouses of deceased veterans who are residents of Montana in the purchase of a first residence. There are no income limits for the borrower, however, there is a loan limit. Among the criteria is that the homebuyer must complete a homeowner education class, and must provide a minimum of \$2500 of personal funds towards the down payment or closing costs. The property must be located in Montana, must be for residential use, and must be the primary residence.

Board member Sorensen asked if it were true that 25% all Montana veterans are homeless. Joe stated that the number is closer to 12-16%, based upon previous homeless surveys conducted in the state. An expansive discussion regarding the challenges serving homeless veterans then took place.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m. The next Board meeting is scheduled for April 19, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. and will be via teleconference. This type Board meeting format ensures compliance with the Governor's energy and budget conservation programs.


Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

April 19, 2012

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairwoman Sylvia Beals at 2 p.m., April 19, 2012 via telephone conferencing. Board members and Montana Veterans Affairs Division staff in attendance were:

Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman
Sarah Price, Member
Bernie Jacobs, Member
Gary Sorensen, Member
State Sen. Larry Jent, Member
Bill Willing, Member
Joe Tropila, Member
Lisa Evers, Member
Brig. Gen. Matthew Quinn, Member

Harry LaFriniere, Member
Joe Foster, Administrator
Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester
Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst
David Boyd, Member
Travis Monroe, Senator Baucus
Don Kettner, Member
Byron Erickson, Member

Chairwoman Beals opened and thanked everyone for being present, whereupon a roll call was taken. She then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve was made by Don Kettner, with Harry LaFriniere seconding. The motion carried.

The new Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Matthew Quinn – who replaced Brig. Gen. John Walsh – was introduced. Brig. Gen. Quinn is long-time Montana Army National Guardsman, and was activated and deployed during Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom.

Joe Foster reported that for the first time in almost two years, we are 100% filled in our veterans service officer positions. The latest hire is retired Army Master Sergeant Rob Graham, in Kalispell. Also, since our last Board meeting, our new hires are Army National Guardsman and Iraqi Freedom combat veteran Ben Barille – working out of the Fort Harrison office, and Air Force veteran Keith Olson – working out of our Miles City office.

Joe then explained the veterans services financial and claims production reports. Both reports are captured on a monthly basis, and show the type claim services we produce; as well as the financial impact of our veterans service officers' (VSO) work effort. The report showed that as of March 1, 2012, the division's VSO's financial impact totaled \$106,311,762. The handout also showed the quantity of claim products produced through March 1, 2012. Of the 2219 claims quantity, 1613 were for disability compensation. Brig. Gen. Quinn asked if we expect to exceed the 2011 financial impact total of \$150,168,741. Joe stated that he expects it to be close. However, with such a large veterans service officer turnover the past year – approx. 50% – it may not. Also, in regards to the claims production report; in all probability we will not reach the 2011 level; again, due to the position vacancies.

The State Veterans Cemetery Program reports that as of March 1, 2012, a total of 190 interments in our three cemeteries. One major construction project is underway, and it is completing the design stage. The Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula will have a large columbaria expansion, adding approximately 950 niches to the current 196 niches in the existing columbarium. The project's construction is expected to be finished by the end of August 2012.

Joe reported on the homeless veteran housing project at Fort Harrison, per the provided news release and letter of support to the Montana Board of Housing (from Joe). However, in the past week, the Board of Housing did not rate the project high enough for funding support, thus suspending the project for a year.


Joe Foster and Brig. Gen. Walsh jointly signed a letter to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki supporting a Helena Vet Center (letter provided the Board). Joe reported recently receiving a response stating that the existing Vet Center outreach to Helena, which originates from Missoula, is underutilized; so a Vet Center in Helena is not supported, at this time, by Sec. Shinseki.

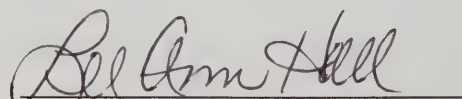
The ongoing scam involving elderly veterans living in retirement homes and assisted living facilities was thoroughly reported. Board members discussed a letter jointly signed by Attorney General Steve Bullock, Director of the Dept. of Public Health and Human Services Anna Whiting-Sorrell and Brig. Gen. John Walsh, which was sent to all licensed facilities in the state, along with a poster. Joe will be presenting this issue at the upcoming Governor's Conference on Aging in early May. The issue generated much discussion and suggestions.

Board member Willing gave a briefing on the Southwest Montana State Veteran's Home (SMSVH) project, based upon a VA report he received. Presently, the SMSVH is in Priority Group 1 (PG1), but is ranked 60 out of the 61 listed projects. Therefore, it is doubtful that there will be enough VA funding available to construct the facility in 2012; however, having PG1 status is positive. The federal grant for this project will be 65% of the construction cost, with the State of Montana responsible for the remaining 35%.

Chairwoman Beals brought up an issue that the Veterans Administration is now mandating approximately 20% of their appointments being conducted over the phone. If a person doesn't want his/her appointment conducted in this manner, the VA must be notified – as the veteran still has a choice in the matter.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m. The next Board meeting is scheduled for October 4, 2012 at 2 p.m. in Helena.


Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

October 4, 2012

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairwoman Sylvia Beals at 2 p.m., October 4, 2012 in Helena (Fort Harrison). Board members and Montana Veterans Affairs Division staff in attendance were:

Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman	Harry LaFriniere, Member
Keith Heavyrunner, Vice-Chairman	Joe Foster, Administrator
Bernie Jacobs, Member	Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester
Gary Sorensen, Member	Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst
State Sen. Larry Jent, Member	David Boyd, Member
Bill Willing, Member	Johnathon Kenneway, Senator Baucus
Joe Tropila, Member	Sarah Price, Member
Peter Olson, Member	Scott Mitchell (for Byron Erickson)
Col. Jeff Ireland (for BG Matthew Quinn)	Mary Creech, Member
Dr. Trena Bonde, Member	Jocelyn Galt, Congressman Rehberg

Chairwoman Beals opened and thanked everyone for being present, whereupon a roll call was taken. She then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Joe Foster reported that the division is once again at 100% veterans service officer staffing. The latest hires are Andrea Montee and Jeff Alberta, both working out of the Fort Harrison veterans service office.

Joe then explained the veterans services financial impact and claims production reports. Both reports are captured on a monthly basis, and show the type claim services we produce; as well as the financial impact of our veterans service officers' (VSO) work effort. The report showed that as of June 30, 2012, the division's VSO's financial impact totaled \$160,453,205. The handout also showed there were 3352 claim products produced through June 30, 2012. Joe also stated that the division's 21 veteran service officers are responsible for 70% of the claim products submitted to the Fort Harrison VA Regional Office; which is also rated – based upon the VA's quality assessments – the top-rated of the VA's 57 Regional Offices.

Joe then related an example of the type service that veterans service officers provide. Roxanne Blanche', veteran service officer in Missoula, was helping out in the Fort Harrison veterans service office when she learned of a terminally ill veteran in the Fort Harrison hospital. This veteran had never filed a claim, even though he was a Viet Nam combat veteran and Purple Heart recipient. With his death expected within days, Roxanne was able to complete a disability claim product and the veteran received – the same day – a 100% disability rating. With this rating and the nature of the veteran's passing, his widow became eligible for Disability and Indemnity Compensation; which ensures her financial and healthcare well-being in the absence of her husband (who ultimately passed

away less than one week later). This is just one example of the type of work our service officers do, and also an example of how the VA's Fort Harrison Regional Office answers the call when this type circumstance exists.

The State Veterans Cemetery Program reports that in FY12 there were a total of 292 interments in the three state veterans cemeteries. Also reported was authorization for a \$506,000 federal VA grant which will construct eight columbaria at the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery – adding 920 niches. Construction began October 3 and should be complete by mid-December 2012.

Early October we received notification from the VA cemetery grants program that they intend to fund our \$1.7 million expansion and improvement project at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery. We have been on the program's waiting list for the past seven years. Largely based upon the highly positive relationship the division has with the grant program and the division's ability to immediately act upon a grant opportunity, the VA has committed to fund the grant this federal fiscal year. Among the cemetery improvements are a columbarium complex, committal shelter, public restroom, additional cemetery entrance/exit road, road paving, and enhancement to the Information Center.

Our cemetery program has started publicizing the memorial headstone opportunity. Any qualified veteran/veteran's spouse is eligible for a memorial headstone at any of our three state veteran cemeteries. Joe sent this information out to the Montana Funeral Directors, DAV, VFW and American Legion.

Joe talked about a report that provides a snapshot of pertinent data that portrays the effectiveness of the State of Montana's veterans' service program; specifically as related to rural veterans services. The report, which compares Montana both nationally and regionally, reveals a very efficient and effective rural outreach program.

Tim Peters, Quartermaster for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, briefed the Board on the VFW's recently produced license plate and asked the Board for their support to make the plate disabled veteran capable, just as the division's "Veteran" plates are. After much discussion, the Board voted not to support the request. The predominate reasons being that the VFW license plate was no different than the other 161 specialty license plates in that it was available to non-veterans and that it competes with the division's "Veteran" and "Patriot" license plates, which fund the cemetery and veterans services program (respectively).

Rick Norine, Bureau Chief with DPHHS Senior and Long Term Care Division, gave an update on the Southwest Montana State Veterans Home construction project. This past summer, DPHHS submitted a letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs requesting that the project be considered for the 2013 construction funding period. Mr. Norine also talked about the home being designed with the new cottage concept. Board member Dr. Trena Bonde asked Mr. Norine to ensure that VA Montana is involved in the process to ensure that a pharmacy is incorporated into the facility.

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Chairwoman Beals asked Mr. Norine if his department is ready for the expected legislative activity which may privatize the Montana State Veterans Home in Columbia Falls. He assured her that the department was ready and spoke of the audit recently published regarding the issue.

Joe provided the Board information regarding the National Veterans Burial Ground to be located in Laurel, replacing the current Yellowstone County Veterans Cemetery. Bruce Knutson provided additional information regarding the expected timeframe when the transformation will take place. The process, which will transfer approximately seven acres of cemetery property to the federal VA, is expected in the next few months.

Next on the agenda is the 2013 Legislative Session. Joe talked about the American Legion's intent for legislation which would authorize "Veteran" to be placed on a Montana driver's license. Sen. Jent stated interest in sponsoring such a Bill, and recommended that the concept be presented to the State Administration and Veterans Affairs Interim Committee for possible committee sponsorship (e.g., a "committee bill"). Joe and Gary White (American Legion) responded to Sen. Jent that they would provide him the information.

Joe gave the Board a heads up that there may be legislation regarding the Gold Star Family license plate; specifically that a Gallatin County resident has stated that she will attempt to have the plate's criteria changed to allow non-combat related deaths be eligible for the plate. Joe provided background information as to the plate's eligibility criteria and asked the Board for guidance as to his testimony if the Bill is generated. After much discussion, a motion was made and passed to oppose the Bill.

Mike Clouse, Legislative Chair for the DAV, talked about the DAV Volunteer Transportation Network's (VTN) intent to request funding from the Legislature for \$200,000. This biennial authorization would be used for the purchase of veterans' transport vehicles and volunteer driver training. After discussion, a motion was made and passed to support this initiative.

Joe asked Tim Peters (VFW) if the organization still intended to request \$80,000 from the State Legislature to help fund its veterans services program. Tim answered "yes." Joe informed the Board that if this Bill does emerge, his intent to is testify that the division has the capability to serve VFW veterans who need claim services. The VFW in Montana has been informed that its national grant which funds its veterans service program is to be discontinued in mid-2013.


Joe provided the Board an update on the "pension poaching" scam, focusing on the division's involvement with the U.S. Senate's Special Committee on Aging, which specifically addressed this issue in June 2012. The result of the hearing is legislation which is expected to create criminal penalties for scammers, and require the federal VA to more actively deal with the issue. The division played a major role in providing the key witness who testified about her father being scammed, and Joe Foster provided – as requested by the Committee – a Statement of Record (in lieu of personal testimony).


Col. Jeff Ireland and Keith Heavyrunner gave an update on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which is a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is charged with improving the quality and availability of prevention, treatment, and rehabilitative services in order to reduce illness, death, disability, and cost to society resulting from substance abuse and mental illnesses. Partnership with state and federal is key, to include the National Guard. The State of Montana is working to establish a system which will efficiently provide accurate and comprehensive information to its veteran, military and family members regarding services which impact their lives, e.g., healthcare, behavior counseling, employment and education.

Joe provided information and stated concerns regarding the federal VA's Benefit Administration's transformation which negatively impacts veteran claim processing, as well as the continuing problem with the centralized system whereby the VA processes pension claim products. Dr. Bonde stated that she understood that the transformation effort had been suspended. (Note: subsequent inquiry found that the transformation process is ongoing, though the VA suspended in its expansion into other VA Regional Offices (RO) – the Fort Harrison RO is part of the pilot program.)

Joe then informed the Board of an "all-terrain" wheelchair that is offered for veterans who have lost the use of their legs. A demonstration (at a later date) of this wheelchair will take place, based upon stated interest by the veterans service organizations.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m. The next Board meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2013 at noon in Helena (Fort Harrison).


Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

- MEETING MINUTES -

February 20, 2013

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairwoman Sylvia Beals at 12-noon, February 20, 2013 in Helena (Fort Harrison). Board members and Montana Veterans Affairs Division staff in attendance were:

Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman	Harry LaFriniere, Member
Keith Heavyrunner, Vice-Chairman	Joe Foster, Administrator
Bernie Jacobs, Member	Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester
Gary Sorensen, Member	Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst
Byron Erickson, Member	David Boyd, Member
Bill Willing, Member	Johnathon Kenneway, Senator Baucus
Joe Tropila, Member	Sarah Price, Member
Peter Olson, Member	Jason Smith, Member
Col. Jeff Ireland (for Maj. Gen. Matthew Quinn)	
Dr. Trena Bonde, Member	

Chairwoman Beals opened and thanked everyone for being present, whereupon a roll call was taken. She then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Joe Foster reported that the division has two vacant veterans service officer positions. These positions will remain vacant until we can recoup the cost of their retirement "payouts."

Joe then explained the veterans services financial impact and claims production reports. Both reports capture statistics on a monthly basis, and show the type claim services produced; as well as the financial impact of our veterans service officers' (VSO) work effort. The report showed that as of February 1, 2013, the division's VSO's financial impact is \$98,526,930. The handout also showed there were 1706 claim products produced as of February 1, 2013. Joe stated that the division's veteran service officers are responsible for over 70% of the claim products submitted to the Fort Harrison VA Regional Office.

Our three state veteran cemeteries had their triennial inspection by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) last summer. All three passed, however, Miles City did have some groundskeeping deficiencies noted; all have now been resolved. The other two cemeteries would have qualified for NCA's award in appearance and operations, but since we were not on the BOSS cemetery computer system at the time of the inspections, we were considered ineligible. Joe stated that his expectation is that our cemeteries will qualify for this particular award next inspection cycle.

The \$506,000 construction project at the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula will be complete this spring, with only landscaping to be completed and niche covers installed. This project added a 960 niche columbaria complex.

Our \$1.7 million expansion and improvement construction project at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison is now in the design process. Among the cemetery improvements are a columbaria complex, committal shelter, public restroom, road paving, enhancement to the Information Center, and new main entrance features. An originally planned second cemetery entrance has been deleted due to the land the entrance road would traverse not belonging to the State of Montana. The federal state veterans cemetery grant cannot fund projects that are not on state land.

In the packets was a press release from the Billings Gazette announcing the new director of the VA Montana Health Care System. Christine Gregory will begin her duties March 4, 2013. Regarding appointments, Joe then informed the Board that he has been appointed to the National Cemetery Administration's advisory council.

Joe then referred to the 2012 Board of Veterans Affairs Biennial Report, which is statutorily required and provided each Board member. Distribution of this report is typically to the Governor's Office, Legislators and interested citizenry.

Dr. Bonde provided insight regarding a recently accomplished formal agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the federal Indian Health Service. A key component being reimbursement processes for direct health care services. The Billings Indian Health Care has been selected to oversee this agreement in Montana, which will be initiated with a pilot program on the Blackfeet Tribal Nation.

Next discussed was the VA State Veterans Home Construction Grants FY 2013 Priority list. The Southwest Montana State Veterans Home in Butte is ranked 73rd on this list. Ms. Kelly Williams, Department of Public Health and Human Services, has been working this issue and does not think there will be funding available in 2013 – due to the priority list ranking. However, she anticipates that the grant may be attained in Fiscal Year 2014.

Deb Matteucci, of the State of Montana's Department of Public Health and Human Services, briefed the Board about the State of Montana's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) program; providing specifics regarding this program's mission to increase access to services for veterans, service members and their families. The Board took formal action to adopt this program under its statutory guidelines. Four Board members have been designated to its Special Committee, which will oversee and monitor the administration and operational conduct of the SAMHSA policy academy and task force. The Board members selected are Dr. Trena Bonde, Vice-Chair Keith Heavyrunner, Maj. Gen. Matthew Quinn, and Joe Foster – as the Board's Executive Council Secretary.

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Joe gave a brief overview of the division's special revenue accounts history and status – as pertaining to both the cemetery and veterans services accounts. Our cemeteries operate solely from special revenue, and the veterans services program is approximately 40% special revenue funded. The statutory basis and history of the special revenue funding was discussed and Joe stated that the Legislature is considering enhancing the division's special revenue, as shown on the provided handout. With additional revenue, the veterans services program would work towards attaining three additional veterans service officer positions; prospectively placed in Belgrade, Kalispell and Miles City.

The 2013 Legislative Session was discussed, specifically in regards to bills relating to veteran issues. The Board was asked to monitor SB 275, which is the bill that will allow veterans to have the word "Veteran" printed on their driver's license.

Other bills that Joe briefed the Board were:

HB 49 – Exempt military pensions from state income tax.


HB 263 – Revise cigarette tax funding laws related to state veterans' homes.

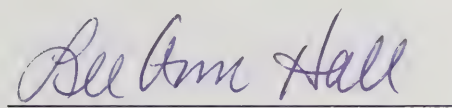
SB 185 – Revise veterans public employment laws

SB 242 – Establish a Montana military service award for Montanans killed in line of duty.

Other legislative items of interest were discussion regarding the VFW's request for \$160,000 to support its veterans services program, and the DAV's request for \$200,000 – which would be used to purchase veteran transport vans.

After discussion, the next Board meeting will be conducted via teleconference and is scheduled for June 5, 2013 at 2 pm. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.


Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

June 5, 2013

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairwoman Sylvia Beals at 2 p.m., June 5, 2013 via teleconference. Board members, visitors and Montana Veterans Affairs Division staff in attendance were:

Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman	Harry LaFriniere, Member
Keith Heavyrunner, Vice-Chairman	Joe Foster, Administrator
Maj. Gen. Matthew Quinn	Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester
Gary Sorensen, Member	Denny Lenoir, Representative Daines
Byron Erickson, Member	Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst
Bill Willing, Member	Sarah Price, Member
Peter Olson, Member	Tim Peters, VFW
Carol Bergstad for (Dr. Trena Bonde)	Ed Croucher, VFW

Chairwoman Beals opened and thanked everyone for being present, whereupon a roll call was taken. She then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Joe Foster reported that the division has two vacant veterans service officer positions. These positions have been announced and we expect to hire them both in July 2013. Our newest employee is Carolyn Collins, who is located in the Kalispell veterans service office. Carolyn came from the Kalispell VA clinic.

Joe then explained the veterans services financial impact and claims production reports. Both reports capture statistics on a monthly basis, and show the type claim services produced; as well as the financial impact of our veterans service officers' (VSO) work effort. The report showed that as of May 1, 2013, the division's VSO's financial impact is \$141,173,543. Last year's fiscal year-end was \$160,453,205, and we anticipate exceeding that level by year end. The handout also showed there were 2402 claim products produced. We anticipate fewer claim products generated this fiscal year due to two full-time service officers being vacant for a six-month period. Last year's total claim production was 3352.

Current number of interments at the state veterans cemeteries are:

Fort Harrison (Helena) – 156	Total last year – 154
Western Montana (Missoula) – 116	Total last year – 115
Eastern Montana (Miles City) – 42	Total last year – 29

These interment levels reflect a marked increase over FY 2012 levels, particularly in the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery.

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The \$506,000 construction project at the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula is now complete. This project added 960 niches to the columbaria complex.

Our \$1.74 million expansion and improvement construction project at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison has formally gone to bid, this process is estimated to take approximately three weeks. The winning company will be selected and construction should begin in August or September 2013.

Next on the agenda is the 2013 Legislative overview. Provided in the information packet is a list of bills impacting the Dept. of Military Affairs. Joe provided an explanation of the most pertinent, passed bills impacting veterans interests or services.

HB 351 – Creates a State of Montana veterans memorial recognizing Iraq/Afghanistan war veterans and fatalities. Also noted by Joe is an interest by Great Falls political leadership that its Veterans Memorial become recognized as a State of Montana memorial. State of Montana veterans memorials can only be accomplished through legislative action and the Governor's support.

HB 447 – Provides a \$1000 scholarship for Montana Purple Heart recipients attending classes at any member of the State University System. The Department of Military affairs was allocated \$50,000 for this program, which will be dispersed by the Veterans Affairs Division. Key criteria are the student has to have a year of previous enrollment at a university/college, however, it does not have to be the previous year. The student must have at least a 2.0 grade point average, and is enrolled in the upcoming semester. Student status can be either part or full-time.

HJ 30 – Mandates an interim study on state benefits/services for veterans. The intent is to better identify veteran needs, which should ultimately result in more pertinent and coordinated bills of veteran interest and benefit. This study will be conducted by Legislative staff.

SB 136 – Revises the veteran home loan program by increasing the amount of money available that the Montana Board of Housing sets aside to support veteran (first time) home loans – which are set at 1% over the very lowest possible rate. Originally there was \$15 million available for this program; this has been increased to \$30 million.

SB 242 – Established a Medal of Valor for Montana service men/women who have been killed in the conduct of war-time duty. It is retroactive to World War II. The medal will be funded through donations, as no money was appropriated. It will be managed by the Department of Military Affairs.

SB 275 – This act authorizes "Veteran" to be noted on a Montana driver's license. Joe has met with the Motor Vehicle Division to discuss how this can be accomplished; the key is that we make sure that veteran status is authenticated.

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To this extent, the division's service officers are the key element. Ensuring a smooth process for both the veteran and involved state personnel is critical.

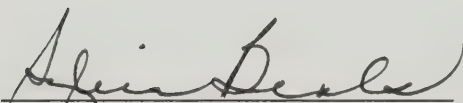
HB 556 – Creates a new Gold Star "Next of Kin" Family license plate, which authorizes specified family members this plate if a family member has passed away under any circumstance during military service. Currently, the Gold Star plate is available only for family members whose family member passed away during hostile action in recognized conflicts. Joe is working with the Motor Vehicle Division to design the plate and determine the administrative process.

Discussed was the legislated allocation of \$200,000 to the Disabled American Veterans to purchase vehicles for its veteran transportation program and \$160,000 to the Veterans of Foreign Wars for its veterans services program. These funds were included in the division's budget and will be dispersed beginning in July 2013. Both allocations are "One Time Only," meaning that any additional funding must be authorized in subsequent Legislative Sessions.

Ed Croucher, from the VFW, had questions about the existing disabled veteran license plate. Chairwoman Beals and Joe Foster provided information, based upon existing statutory qualification criteria.

Chairwoman Beals then recognized the outstanding service of outgoing Board member and current Vice-Chair Keith Heavyrunner. Many Board members spoke about Keith's positive impacts on Native veteran issues. Keith's term ends August 1, 2013.

With no additional questions or discussion from Board members or the public, the next Board meeting's date and location was discussed and determined. The next meeting will be held in Butte on August 28, 2013 at 2 p.m. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.


Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman
Lee Ann Hall, Recorder

MONTANA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - MEETING MINUTES -

August 28, 2013

The Montana Board of Veterans Affairs was called to order by Chairwoman Sylvia Beals at 2 p.m., August 28, 2013 in Butte, Montana. Board members and Montana Veterans Affairs Division staff in attendance were:

Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman

Peter Olson, Member

Gary Sorensen, Member

Bill Willing, Member

Mary Creech, Member

Shawn Backbone, Member

Dave Williamson, Regional Veterans Service Officer

Brig. Gen. Brad Livingston (for Maj. Gen Matthew Quinn)

Scott Mitchell (for Byron Erickson)

David Boyd, Member

Joe Foster, Administrator

Bruce Knutson, Senator Tester

Jason Smith, Member

Lee Ann Hall, Budget Analyst

Larry Jent, Member

Chairwoman Beals opened and thanked everyone for being present, and roll call was taken. She then asked if there were any additions or deletions to last meeting's Minutes; and if none, that a motion be made to approve the Minutes, as written. With no changes discussed or made, the motion to approve was so moved and seconded. The motion carried.

Joe Foster reported that the division has hired two new veteran service officers; Betty Franklin for the Helena (Ft. Harrison) office and Sean Malcolm for the Missoula office. We currently have a veteran service officer position open in Great Falls and we expect to fill it in October. The position is open as Rich Gaskins, Regional Veterans Service Office, resigned. Judy Loendorf from the Havre office was selected as the new Regional Veterans Service Officer; her region includes the Havre, Great Falls and Lewistown service offices.

Joe then explained the veterans services financial impact and claims production reports. Both reports capture statistics on a monthly basis, and show the type claim services produced; as well as the financial impact of our veterans service officers' work effort. The report showed that as of August 1, 2013 (the first month of fiscal year 2014), the division's financial impact is \$14,154,372. Last fiscal year's (FY13) financial impact totaled \$166,833,099. The "production" handout showed 205 claim products filed, as of August 1, 2013. FY13's claims production total was 2833. All claims are submitted to either the federal VA's Regional Office at Fort Harrison or its Pension Management Center in St. Paul, MN.

Three Veterans Affairs Division employees were selected for the Governor's Award for Performance Excellence. Kelly Ackerman – Veterans Services Program Manager, Tom Hall – Veterans Cemetery Program Manager, and Lee Ann Hall – Budget Analyst were selected as a "team." This is the third year in a row that Veterans Affairs Division employees have been selected for this prestigious recognition. There are seven state divisions within the Department of Military Affairs.

Regarding the veteran cemetery program, the number of burials for fiscal year 2013 (which ends June 30, 2013) is as follows, and is compared to fiscal year 2012 totals:

FY13	
Fort Harrison (Helena) – 178	Total in FY12 – 154
Western Montana (Missoula) – 135	Total in FY12 – 115
Eastern Montana (Miles City) – 45	Total in FY12 – 29

These interment levels reflect a significant increase over the previous fiscal year.

The \$506,000 construction project at the Western Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Missoula is now complete. This project added 960 niches to the columbaria complex.

The \$1.74 million expansion and improvement construction project at the Montana State Veterans Cemetery at Fort Harrison has begun. The project will include new entrance walls, a committal shelter, an 800-niche columbaria complex and plaza, a paved/fenced equipment compound, and road work. Wadsworth Construction, headquartered in Great Falls, is the general contractor. The project is scheduled, per contract, for completion within 150 days.

Next on the agenda was the 2013 Legislative overview. Per the legislative bills listing provided, Joe explained the most significant, passed bills which impact veteran interests or services. Joe also thanked State Senator Larry Jent for his active support and proponentcy for veterans specifically, and the Department of Military Affairs, generally.

Montana Purple Heart recipients can receive a \$1000 grant if enrolled at any of the state's University System units. The Veterans Affairs Division was allocated \$50,000 specifically for this program, and it will be disbursed based upon billing received from the colleges/universities. There are key criteria which must be met to qualify for the scholarship grant. The University System verifies eligibility status, and the grants are made on a "first come / first serve" basis. Students can be enrolled either part or full-time.

A Medal of Valor for a family member of a Montana service man/woman killed during war-time duty was authorized, and is retroactive through World War II. The medal will be funded through donations, as no money was appropriated. It will be managed by the Department of Military Affairs.

Joe has met repeatedly with Motor Vehicle Division personnel to coordinate the "Next of Kin" Gold Star Family license plate and "Veteran" on a state driver's license initiatives authorized by the Legislature. Significantly, the division's veterans service offices will be solely responsible for authenticating qualified veteran status for applicants. The "Next of Kin" license plate should be available in the Fall, and "Veteran" identification on a driver's license is expected by January 1, 2014. The "Next of Kin" license plate is available for family members

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of military personnel who have died while in military service, regardless of circumstance or location.

The legislature allocated \$200,000 to the Disabled American Veterans to purchase vehicles for its veteran transportation program and \$160,000 to the Veterans of Foreign Wars for its veterans services program. These funds were included in the division's budget and will be dispersed, as requested by the respective organizations, effective July 2013. Both allocations are "One Time Only," meaning that any additional funding – beyond this biennium – must be re-authorized by subsequent Legislative Sessions.

Elections were held for Board Chair and Vice-Chair. Incumbent Sylvia Beals was re-elected to serve as Chair, and Bill Willing was elected as Vice-Chairman. Each term has duration of two years, with a maximum of two terms served.

Significant discussion took place regarding federal VA healthcare issues and policies; to include potential complications when TriCare is involved. After much discussion, it was decided that Joe Foster would request a briefing/question and answer forum with VA officials to take place during a Board meeting (no VA representative was present during this Board meeting). This will be scheduled as soon as practical.

With no additional questions or discussion from Board members or the attending public, the next Board meeting's date and location were discussed and determined. The next meeting will be a teleconference – to take place December 4, 2013 at 2 p.m. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.


Sylvia Beals, Chairwoman


Lee Ann Hall, Recorder



DIRECTIONS FOR OPERATING MINUTE BOOKS

TO OPEN:

1. Raise either cover to an angle not over 90°.
2. Pull out locking rod.
3. The studs or posts are now released, permitting the insertion or removal of sheets.

TO CLOSE:

1. Raise cover on the side which has been opened to an angle of not over 90°.
2. Align the sheets in the binder so that the studs or posts fit into the slots in the metal casing, on the inside of the cover.
3. Push in the locking rod, so that the 3 studs or posts are securely engaged.

TO LOCK PERMANENTLY:

When the book has been completed, it can be permanently sealed, as follows:

1. Remove Threaded V wrench from envelope sent with Binder.
2. Push slides all the way in.
3. Insert one end of the threaded V wrench into hole located in the hinge between the first and second stud.
4. Screw in the wrench clockwise, until the end breaks off.
5. The wrench has two threaded end plugs for the locking of both hinges.

CAUTION: Be sure that all studs are engaged before locking binder.

GUARANTEE

The undersigned hereby guarantees the metal in this loose leaf device against any defect of workmanship or material occasioned by or arising from its reasonable use and wear. Should any such defect appear it will be repaired by us without charge upon presentation by any reputable stationary dealer.

BOORUM & PEASE

MB 312

